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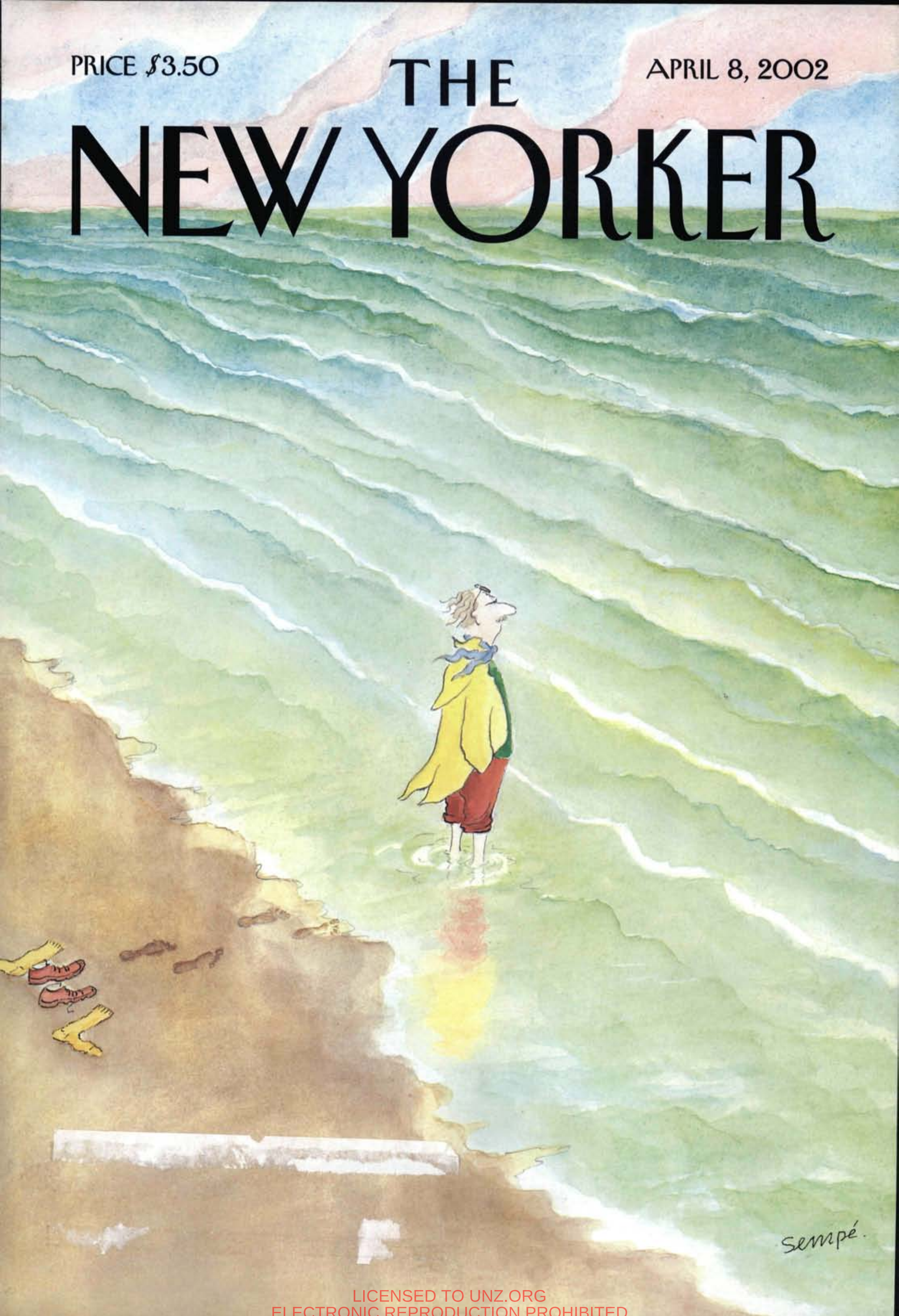
APRIL 8, 2002



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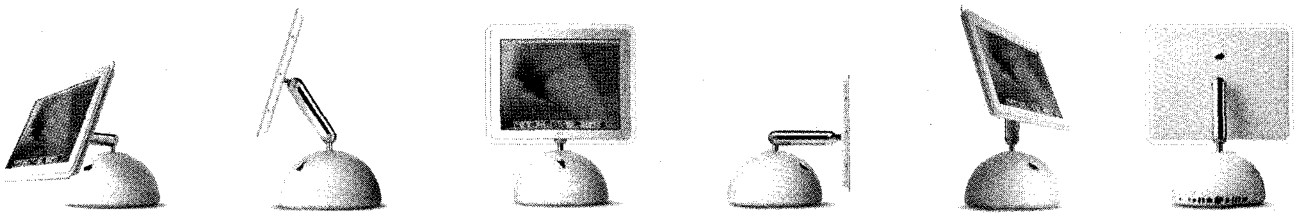

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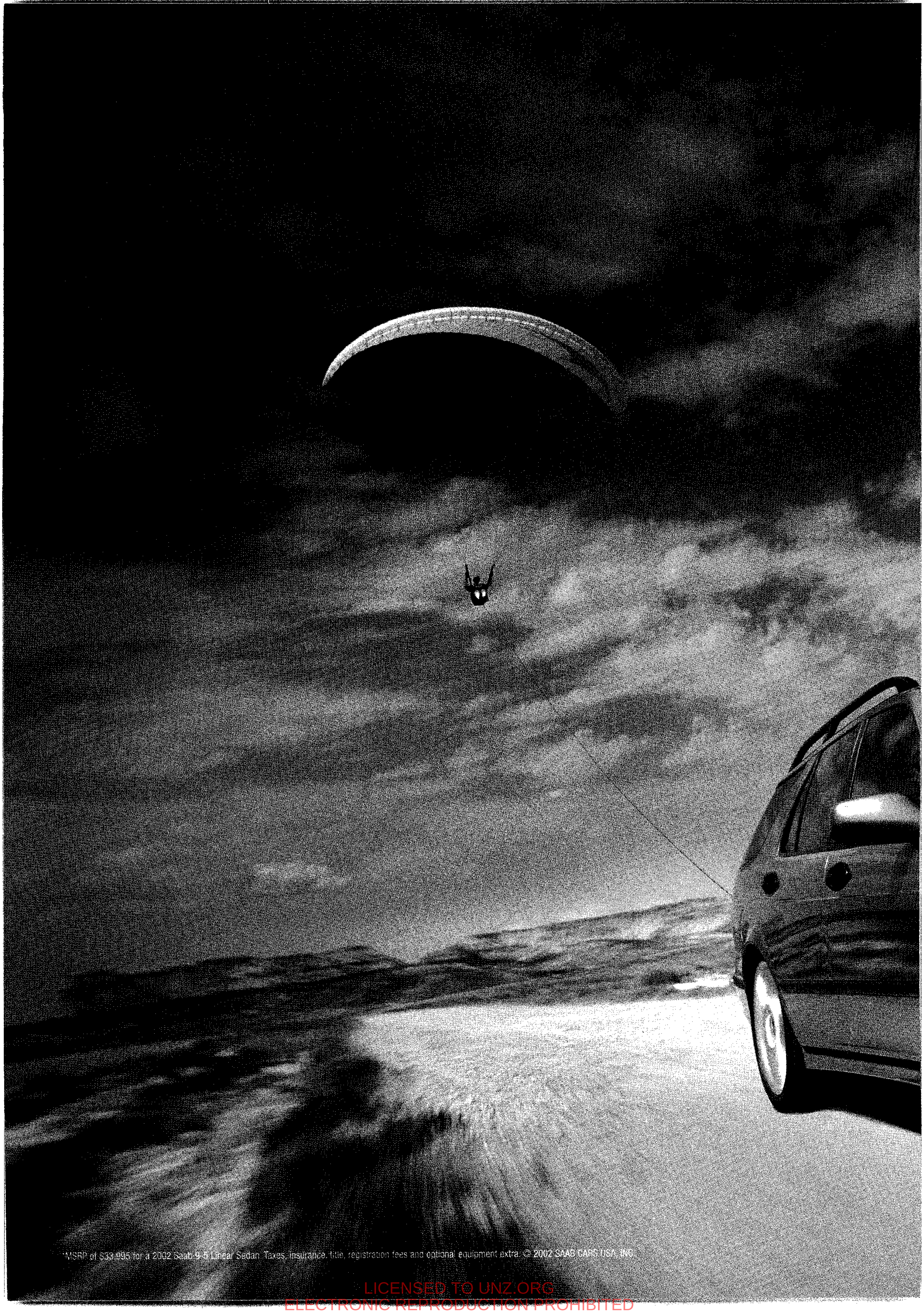

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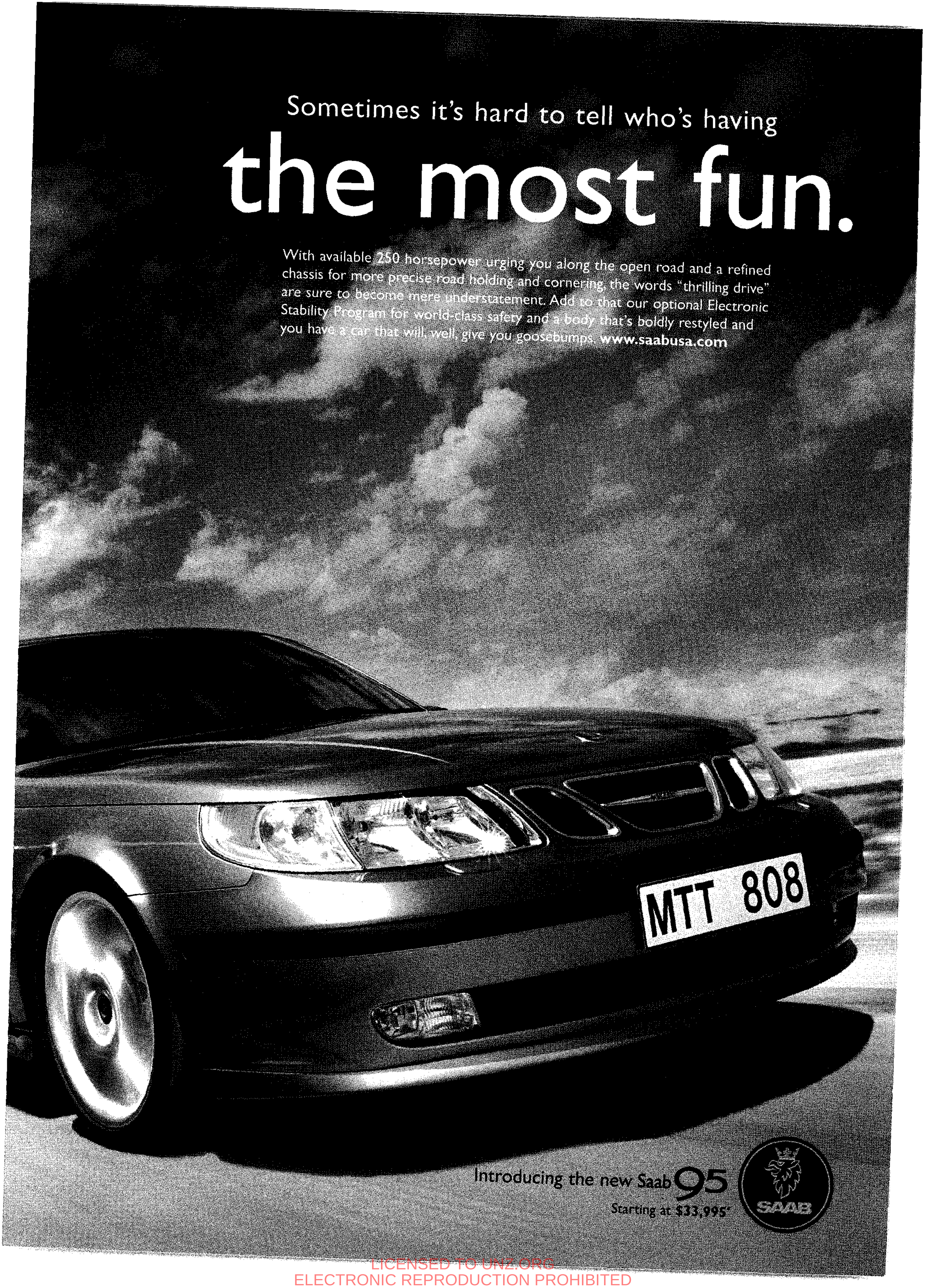
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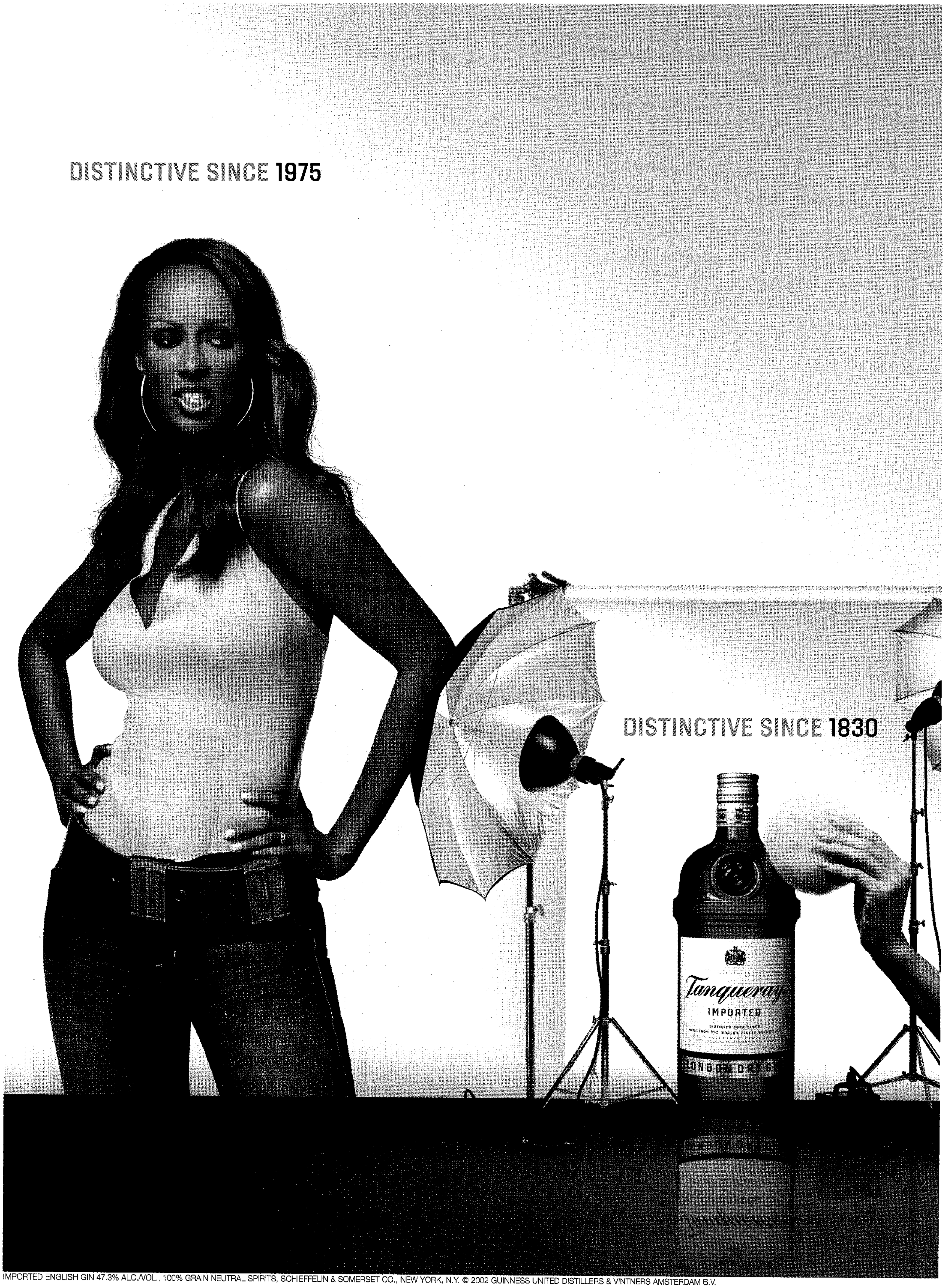
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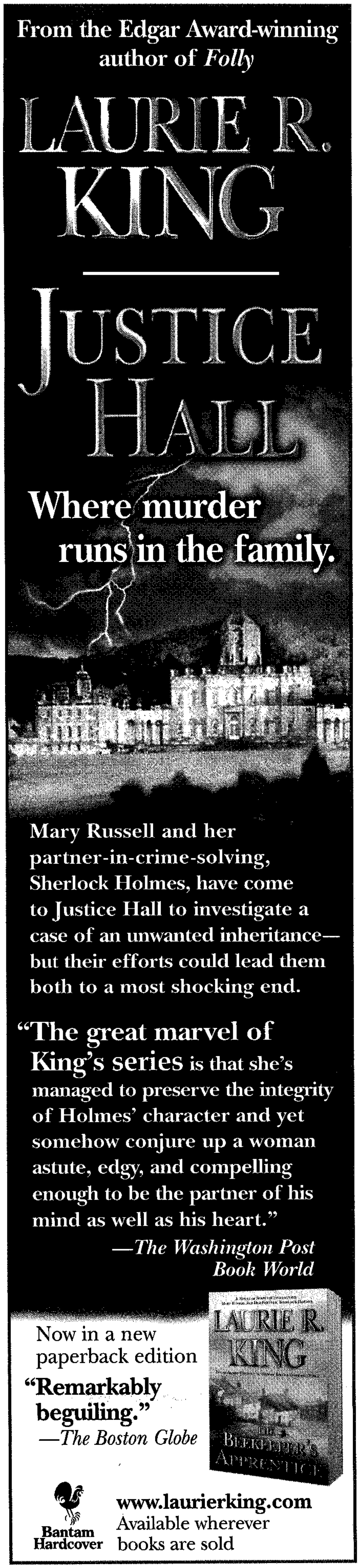

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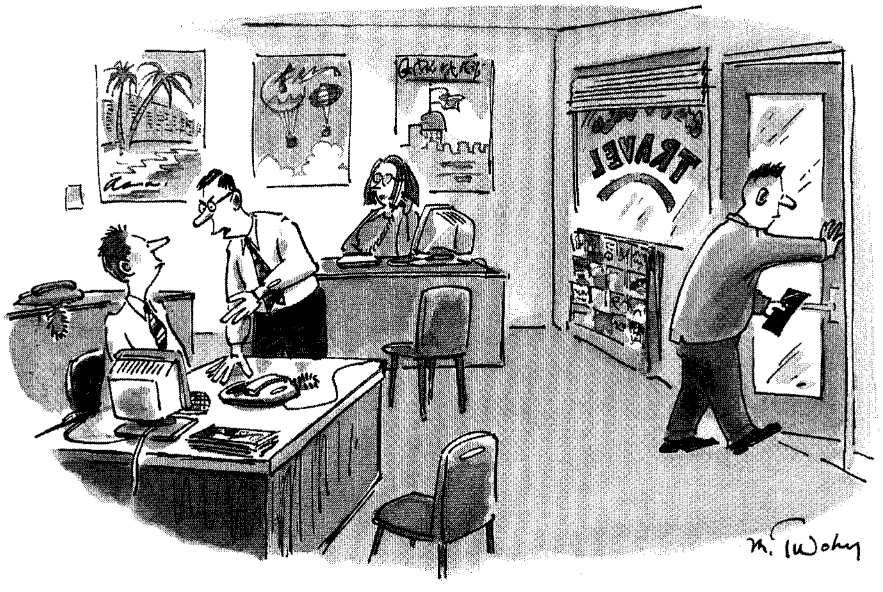
Michael Roberts (The Back Page, p. 98), the magazine's fashion editor, has contributed covers, illustrations, and photographs to the magazine. ♦



"Let's go back to 'Bon voyage,' Collins, and drop 'You're a brave man.' "

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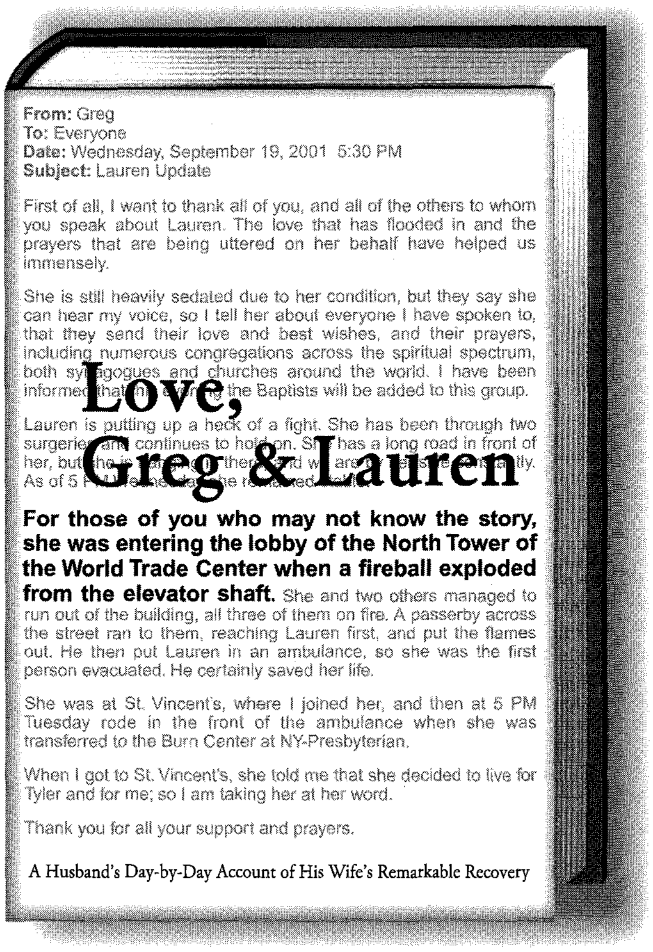

From: Greg
To: Everyone
Date: Wednesday, September 19, 2001 5:30 PM
Subject: Lauren Update

First of all, I want to thank all of you, and all of the others to whom you speak about Lauren. The love that has flooded in and the prayers that are being uttered on her behalf have helped us immensely.

She is still heavily sedated due to her condition, but they say she can hear my voice, so I tell her about everyone I have spoken to, that they send their love and best wishes, and their prayers, including numerous congregations across the spiritual spectrum, both synagogues and churches around the world. I have been informed that [illegible] the Baptists will be added to this group.

Lauren is putting up a heck of a fight. She has been through two surgeries and continues to hold on. She has a long road in front of her, but she is [illegible] together and we [illegible] are [illegible] ly. As of 5 [illegible] she [illegible]

For those of you who may not know the story, she was entering the lobby of the North Tower of the World Trade Center when a fireball exploded from the elevator shaft. She and two others managed to run out of the building, all three of them on fire. A passerby across the street ran to them, reaching Lauren first, and put the flames out. He then put Lauren in an ambulance, so she was the first person evacuated. He certainly saved her life.

She was at St. Vincent's, where I joined her, and then at 5 PM Tuesday rode in the front of the ambulance when she was transferred to the Burn Center at NY-Presbyterian.

When I got to St. Vincent's, she told me that she decided to live for Tyler and for me; so I am taking her at her word.

Thank you for all your support and prayers.

Love,
Greg & Lauren
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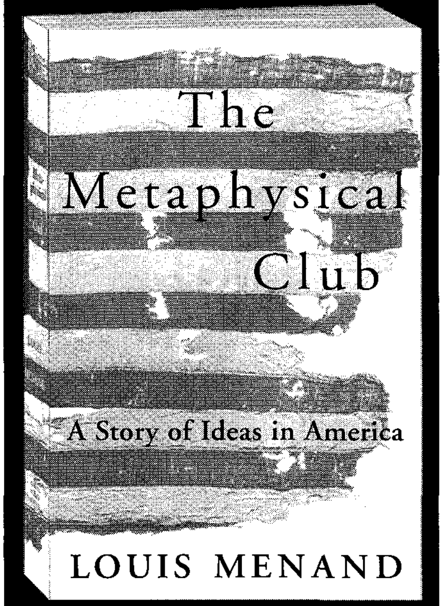

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—*The Economist*

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THE MAIL

TRAGIC WARRIORS

David Denby feels obliged to lock "We Were Soldiers" into a historical perspective, writing that it elides "the discordant character of a tragic war" (The Current Cinema, March 11th). But, in 2002, it is hardly necessary to instruct readers that Vietnam was an unmitigated disaster. "We Were Soldiers" is nothing more, and nothing less, than a graphic, compelling, and pointedly apolitical description of a ferocious firefight and its effects on the men involved and their widows. That is what the movie and the book it was based on set out to do, and they do it well. To isolate an event, to describe it powerfully, and to leave its political and military implications to others is no crime.

Eric D. Rosenfeld
Amenia, N.Y.

Denby describes as "unconsciously condescending" the portrayal of the wives in "We Were Soldiers," who are "as supportive as deeply rooted oaks." But the movie is true to its time; it is also a reminder that baby boomers have, in a sense, appropriated Vietnam as our war—it was ours by the end, but it didn't start out that way. We grew into it, as the protests it inspired came to encompass other causes, including feminism. Those of us who were younger than Hal Moore's men have absorbed the smugness of history, believing that Johnson was rightly driven from office, that Nixon got his due, and that a wall with the names of those who will never grow old is a sufficient memorial. But there are too few monuments to the men who survived to find a world that had cut them loose from their past. Perhaps this movie can be one.

Paulette S. Lowe
Glendale, Ariz.

HUMPHREY'S STAND

Thank you for a stirring and heartbreaking piece on the life of a truly decent politician, Hubert Humphrey ("The Orator of the Dawn," March 4th). When I was growing up as a young black girl in the nineteen-sixties, my mother would talk to me about African-American history—stories of wonder as well as of horror and racism. A friend of hers published a newspaper for Minneapolis's black community, and I would hear that, thanks to Humphrey, who had been the city's mayor, interracial couples did not have to fear for their safety. I also remember Humphrey's saying that the two most important movements in American history were those of civil rights and of labor. One hopes that, someday, African-Americans will embrace his work and memory as they have that of the Kennedy brothers.

Peggy Maria Spates-Johnson
San Diego, Calif.

WELCOME TO CALIFORNIA

Roger Angell, in his piece on citywide book readings, states that San Francisco has picked "The Grapes of Wrath" (The Talk of the Town, March 11th). In fact, the entire state of California has been invited to read Steinbeck's novel. If we have escaped the brouhaha in New York which Angell wittily recounts, it's not because we don't have a diversity of opinion here. California, like New York, is a state of immigrants. Since 1850, there has never been a time when more than half the people living in California were born here, so the immigrant's story is an important part of our shared experience. Our aim is not only to have Californians reading and talking about an archetypal California novel but to prompt them to tell their own stories over the next several years. We thought that, by first asking Californians to read a great California story, we could encourage them to help write the next one.

Jim Quay, Executive Director
California Council for the Humanities
San Francisco, Calif.

•

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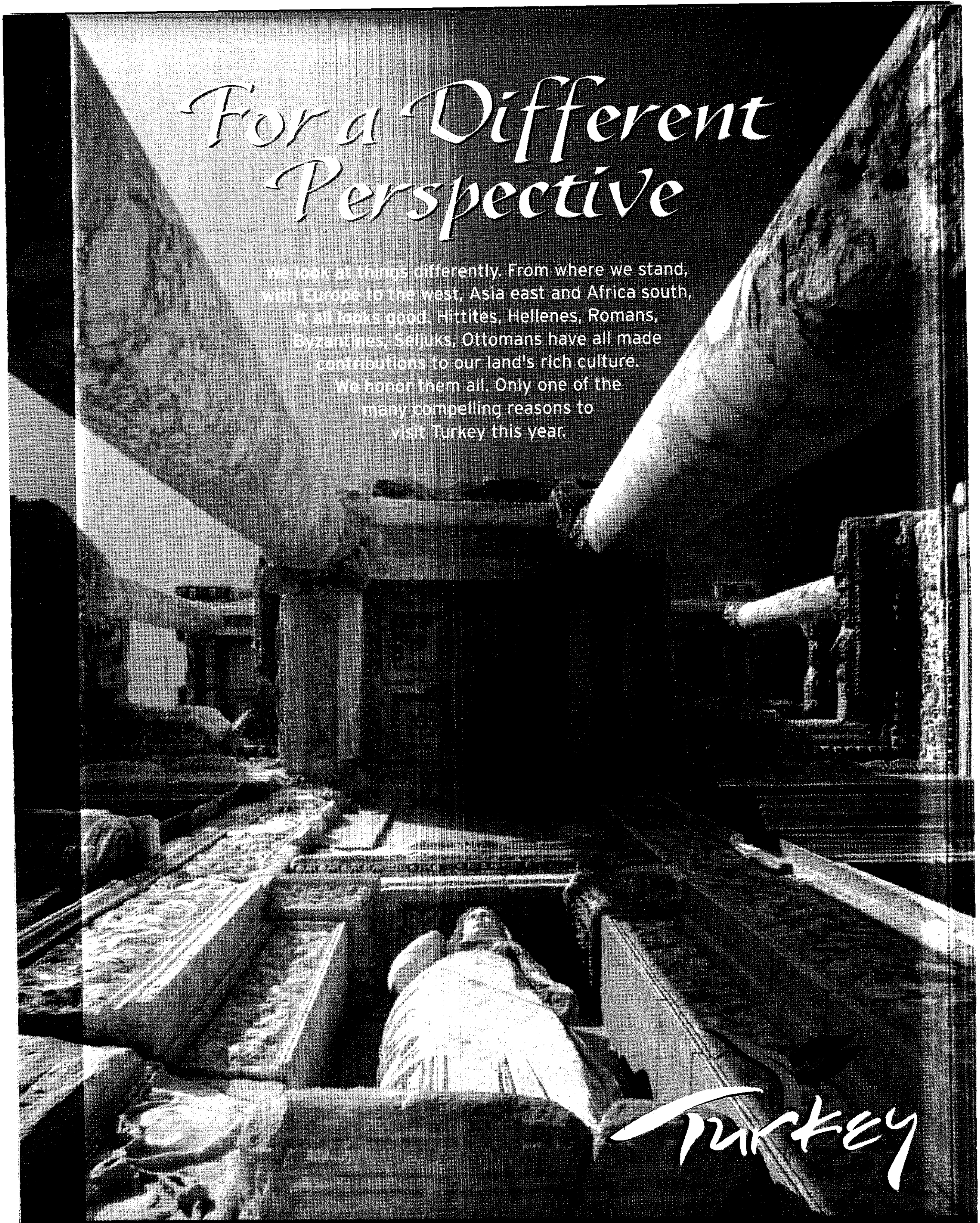

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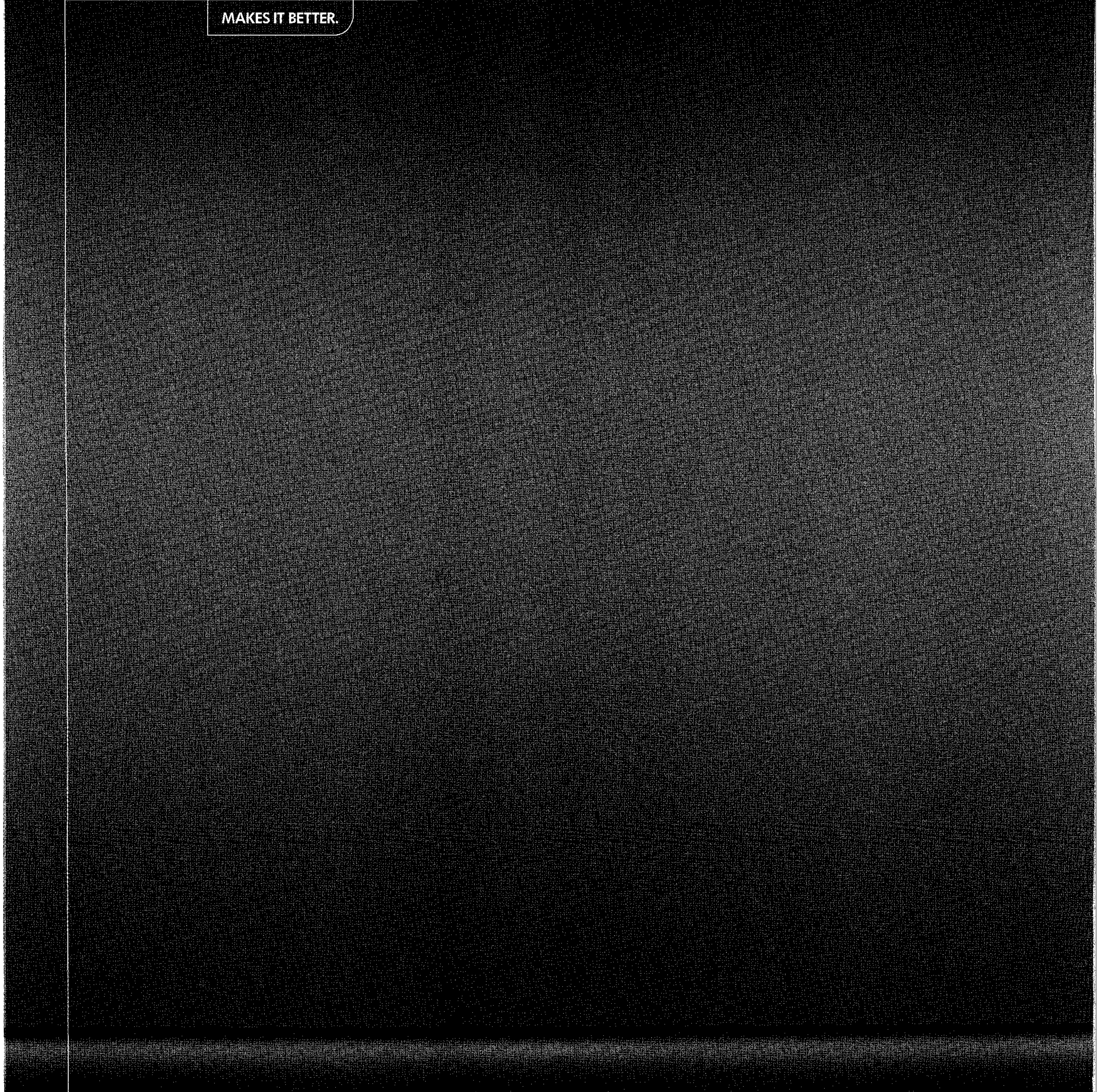

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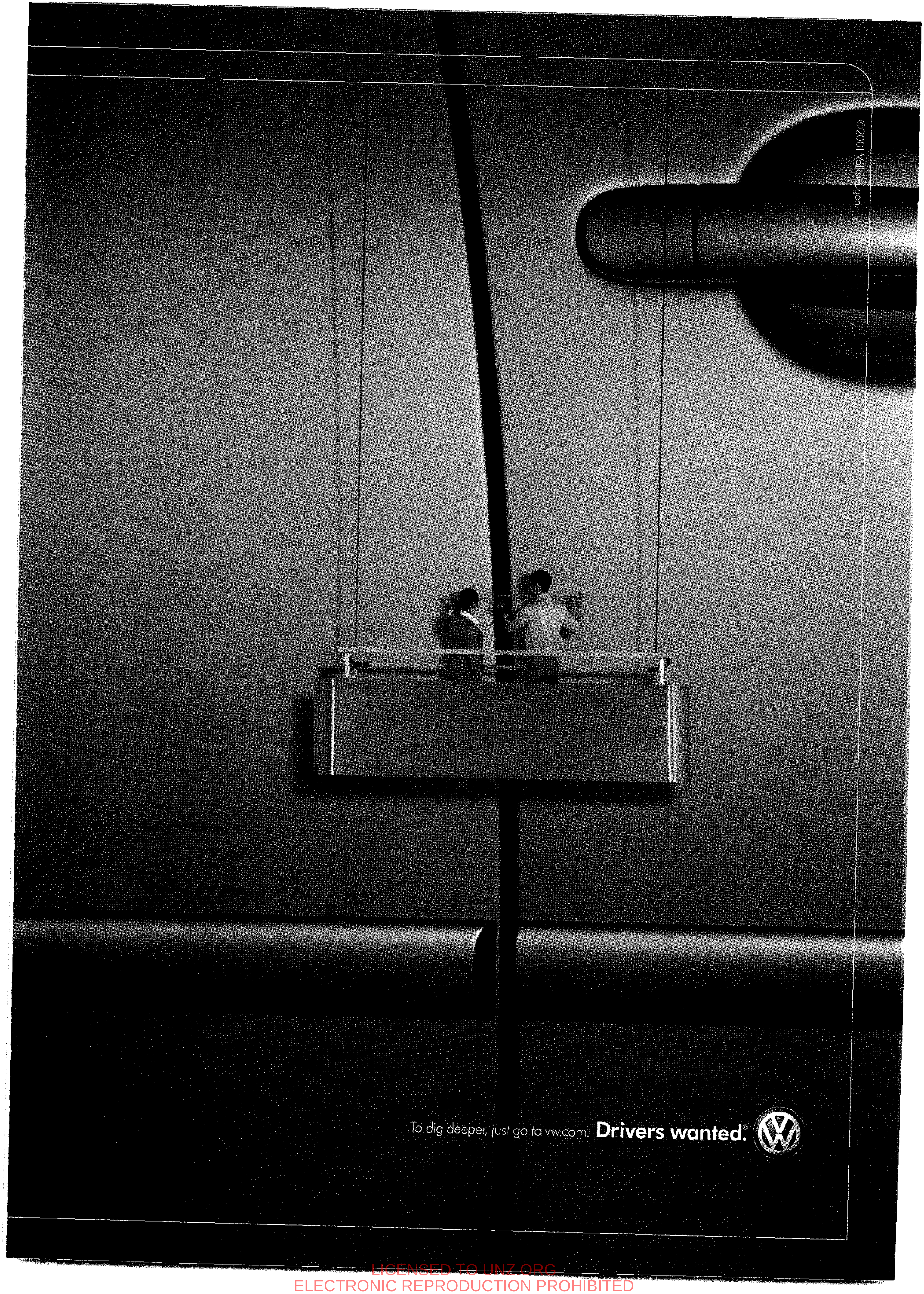
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ANDORRA
A Theatre for a New Audience revival of the late Swiss playwright Max Frisch's 1961 parable about anti-Semitism. In previews through April 6. Opens April 7 at 7. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

THE ELEPHANT MAN
Billy Crudup has the title role in a revival of Bernard Pomerance's 1979 drama, directed by Sean Mathias. Kate Burton and Rupert Graves are also in the cast. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GOLEM
Robert Prosky stars in H. Leivick's 1921 version of the legend of the Golem of Prague, in which a sixteenth-century rabbi defies God to protect his people from attack. Lawrence Sacharow is the director. In previews. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 239-6200.)

THE GRADUATE
From London's West End, Terry Johnson's adaptation of the 1967 film, starring Kathleen Turner, Jason Biggs, and Alicia Silverstone. Mr. Johnson is the director. Two previews on April 3. Opens April 4 at 6:30. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

HELEN
Tony Kushner directs Ellen McLaughlin's modern interpretation of the plight of Helen of Troy. In previews through the April 7 matinée. Opens that night at 7. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

KILT
A young man travels to Scotland for his grandfather's funeral and secrets are revealed, in a play written by Jonathan Wilson and directed by Jack Hofsiss. Previews begin April 6. (The Directors Company, 311 W. 43rd St. 206-1515.)

MISTER
Anthony Rapp portrays an inner-city schoolteacher who is accused of murder, in a new musical by Tony Vellela (book and lyrics) and Misha Piatigorsky (score). Previews begin April 9. (Present Company Theatorium, 196-98 Stanton St. 420-8877.)

MORNING'S AT SEVEN
A Lincoln Center revival of Paul Osborn's 1939 back-yard drama, starring Elizabeth Franz, Julie Hagerty, Buck Henry, Piper Laurie, Christopher Lloyd, William Biff McGuire, Estelle Parsons, Frances Sternhagen, and Stephen Tobolowsky. Daniel Sullivan is the director. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM
The sleight-of-hand artist returns to New York with a new show, directed by David Mamet. Previews begin April 9. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

SWIMMING WITH WATERMELONS
An American G.I. and a young Japanese woman fall in love in occupied Japan, in a play with music created by Diane Paulus, Randy Weiner, and Project 400. In previews. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303.)

TALK
In Carl Hancock Rux's play, staged by the Foundry Theatre, the life of a late black writer from the Beat era is explored by a panel of literati who knew him. Marion McClinton is the director. In previews through April 7. Opens April 9 at 7:30. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 800-965-4827.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
The 1967 movie about a New York City flapper is the basis for a new musical by Dick Scanlan (book and new lyrics), the late Richard Morris (book), and Jeanine Tesori (new songs). Michael Mayer is the director. In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

3 DARK TALES
The international company Theatre O's "tragicomedy in three movements." In previews through April 7. Opens April 9 at 7. (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG
The Public Theatre's production of Suzan-Lori Parks's play has moved to Broadway, starring Jeffrey Wright and Mos Def. George C. Wolfe is the director. In previews through April 6. Opens April 7 at 6:30. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

THE UNDERPANTS
Carl Sternheim's 1910 comedy, newly adapted by Steve Martin. Barry Edelstein is the director. Preview on April 3. Opens April 4 at 7. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AN ALMOST HOLY PICTURE
The kinds of questions raised by Heather McDonald's limpid, well-written monologue, a meditation on the nature of faith, can't be found on CNN, which is the evening's asset. But the play's incidents are narrated, not dramatized, and that is its limitation. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/18 & 25/02.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300. Closes April 7.)

BEA ARTHUR ON BROADWAY: JUST BETWEEN FRIENDS
The stage and screen star performs songs and reminisces about her six-decade career. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes April 14.)

THE CARPETBAGGER'S CHILDREN
Jean Stapleton, Hallie Foote, and Roberta Maxwell portray three daughters of a Union soldier, in a new play by Horton Foote. Michael Wilson is the director. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE CRUCIBLE
Arthur Miller's reimagining of the Salem witch-hunt of 1692, here in a masterly revival by Richard Eyre, is both a terrific melodramatic yarn that combines love interest and courtroom drama and a cunning allegory for the blacklisting delirium of the House Un-American Activities Committee; it is one of the only theatrical remnants of those craven years. Abigail Williams (the edgy, excellent Angela Bettis), an orphaned seventeen-year-old Puritan, has been seen dancing in the woods trying to cast a spell over the wife (the expert Laura Linney) of her thirty-five-year-old lover and former employer, John Proctor (Liam Neeson, who is a force of nature). Miller demonstrates the hysteric turning herself into an event in order to preserve a sense of goodness and to project her dark, violent, repressed feelings onto others. She becomes the psychological paradigm of the community. Murkiness—the crepuscular gloom of Paul Gallo's lighting—is this production's dominating atmosphere. Shards of light slant through the rough-hewn slabs of wood in Tim Hatley's brooding behemoth set, which contracts to convey the shadowy claustrophobia of Puritan habitation and expands to suggest the monumentality of the stockade. (3/18/02) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

THE DAZZLE
It's probably perfectly natural to worry that the sum of one's existence will end up being nothing more than an awful mess. In the true case of the infamous Collyer brothers, whose decaying bodies were discovered in 1947 buried beneath a lifetime collection of junk, that fear became a reality of phenomenal proportions. The terrific playwright Richard Greenberg has reimagined the brothers' fatal mistake (using love of the world's things, including knowledge, as a shield against the more painful love of humanity) with mixed results. His play is extremely long on longueurs (in the end, neurotics are actually pretty boring), but thanks to fine performances by the heretofore underrated Reg Rogers, as a concert pianist, and Peter Frechette, as his protective lawyer brother, it has numerous moments of funny-sad

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clarity. By adding to their history a woman (Francie Swift) who loved them both, Greenberg steers the audience toward renewed affection for the gift of existence rather than its trappings. David Warren is the director. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

ELAINE STRITCH AT LIBERTY
In her extraordinary one-woman show (co-created with *The New Yorker's* theatre critic John Lahr), Stritchie, as Noel Coward called her, once and for all confirms her status as a living legend. As she sings songs and tells tales about the ups and downs of her long life in the theatre, she ends up capturing more than a single lifetime; her show is the synthesis of so much that is rich and rewarding and heartbreaking about life on the stage. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

THE FAB 4 REACH THE PEARLY GATES
A rock band from Liverpool must choose between reincarnation and the afterlife, in a play by the Philadelphia troupe New Paradise Laboratories. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes April 14.)

FORTUNE'S FOOL
Turgenev's comedy, starring Alan Bates and Frank Langella. Arthur Penn is the director. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

FRANNY'S WAY
In Richard Nelson's latest play, staged by Playwrights Horizons, two teen-age sisters make a trip to Greenwich Village in 1957. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 279-4200. Closes April 14.)

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA?
Left to his own devices, without society's rules or the superego's tyrannical eye, homo sapiens would shtup mud. Or so Edward Albee contends in his ninety-minute anecdote about a happily married, successful architect who falls in love with a goat called Sylvia. It takes all of Albee's expertise to tease this joke into an evening; but it allows Mercedes Ruehl some hilarious moments of high dudgeon as she trashes the house and her husband for "cruising livestock." The sex happens offstage, alas; if Mr. Albee had put his special pleading for bestiality in front of the paying customers, they'd be getting something for their top dollar. David Esbjornson is the director. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GODFADDA WORKOUT
A one-man show written and performed by Seth Isler. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

THE GUYS
In Anne Nelson's play, an editor (Swoosie Kurtz) helps a fire chief (Tim Robbins) write eulogies for the funerals of eight men from his company, who were killed in the September 11th attacks. Jim Simpson is the director. (The Flea, 41 White St. 206-1515.)

THE LAST FIVE YEARS
This new work by the composer Jason Robert Brown ("Parade") is not really a musical per se (it has no book to speak of); it's a song cycle of charming, often funny, but not terribly memorable tunes that trace the five-year relationship of a young New York City couple. The super-talented Norbert Leo Butz and Sherie René Scott do everything in their admirable power to bring the characters into sharp focus. But Brown has made the pair less than three-dimensional and set them down in a show in which they rarely interact (a device that is probably meant to highlight their inherent isolation but which instead makes it seem like they've never met). On top of it all, the audience knows from the outset that the couple is going to part ways, so there's not much here in the way of surprises. Daisy Prince is the director. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

MAMMA MIA!
This smorgasbord of song, the brainchild of Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, the male half of the seventies supergroup ABBA, is nothing but hokum—a chucklehead pleasure. Catherine Johnson's book, which is simply a slick cartoon, connects the dots between the band's No. 1 singles. (11/5/01) (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.)

MARIA DEL BOSCO
(SEX & RACING CARS: A SOUND OPERA)
The avant-garde playwright Richard Foreman's fiftieth play. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650. Closes April 27.)

METAMORPHOSES
In Ovid's tales, loosely adapted and directed by Mary Zimmerman, who has had the ingenious idea of staging the caprice of the gods in a swimming pool, water is life; it calls up associations with the unconscious, the primordial ooze, birth, and sex. The elegant, surreal playfulness of the stage picture broadcasts the tone of Zimmerman's deft direction and her vernacular reinventions. It's fun and full of wonder. But Zimmerman's charming cartoons illustrate rather than dramatize psychic struggle. Because of her scenic prowess, Zimmerman pulls the show off without getting it quite right. The swimming pool, which is the show's gimmick, turns out to be its metaphor—refreshing and shallow. (3/18/02) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

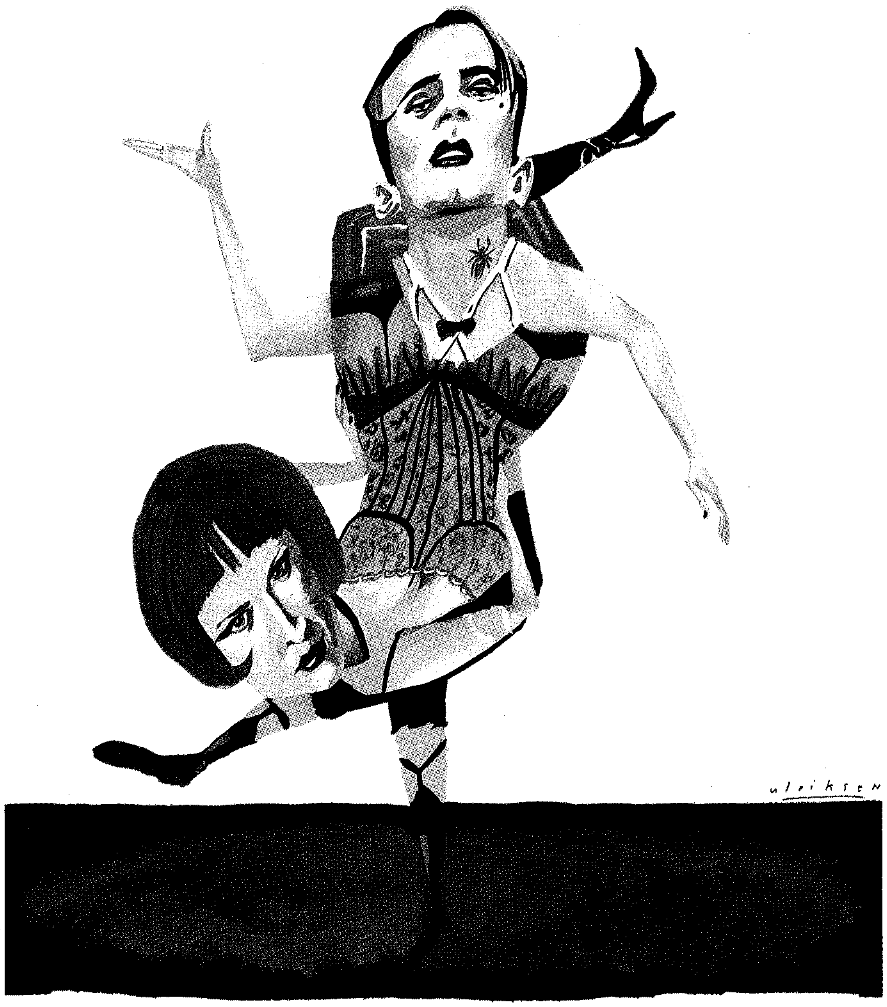
MISS EVERS' BOYS
David Feldshuh's drama, inspired by experiments that the U.S. Public Health Service performed on black men from the thirties through the seventies to determine the effects of untreated syphilis. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200. Closes April 14.)

MR. GOLDWYN
As an exercise in hagiography, this play about the Hollywood mogul and legendary maestro of the malaprop, written by Marsha Lebby and John Lollos, makes A&E's "Biography" look edgy. The year is 1952. The movies are under siege from television; the industry is under investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee, and, against all the odds, Samuel Goldwyn (Alan King), who at seventy-one is still a force to be reckoned with, is in the midst of pulling into a final cinematic inside straight with "Hans Christian Andersen." But, even in this tempest-tossed time, the writers manage to hit only still water. The show has no dramatic trajectory, no psychological insight, and no second act. (3/25/02) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

NECESSARY TARGETS
In Eve Ensler's new play, a New York psychiatrist (Shirley Knight) goes to Bosnia in 1995 to help treat the women at a refugee camp. She has arrived with all the wrong clothes and with little preparation (she thinks people in Bosnia speak Bosnian). At first, she is undone by the demands of the situation, and then is remade by what those demands bring out in her. Working with her is a tough young trauma counsellor (Catherine Kellner), who is writing a book about people in trouble spots around the world and is a one-dimensional stand-in for all coldhearted journalists who are interested only in the story, not in the people telling it. The play proceeds predictably, but Knight makes her character's transformation moving. (3/11/02) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

NOISES OFF
Jeremy Sams's revival of Michael Frayn's 1982 backstage comedy, a farce within an antic farce, is blissful fun. As the dysfunctional troupe of the travelling show "Nothing On," all the members of the excellent cast shine in roles that lesser comedians would surely find daunting. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

NO TIME FOR COMEDY
When S. N. Behrman's play was first produced, in 1939, starring Katharine Cornell and Laurence Olivier, Spain was the testing ground for a brand of barbarity that would soon engulf the rest of the continent. Behrman was known as the American Noël Coward, and "No Time for Comedy" is a play about a playwright struggling with his dubious role as a purveyor of high wit in a time of gathering disaster. It proves a problematic mixture today, half adulterous manners and half artistic soul-searching. As the part-



Molly Ringwald and Raúl Esparza, the current stars of "Cabaret."

MARK ULRIKSEN

LANDS' END

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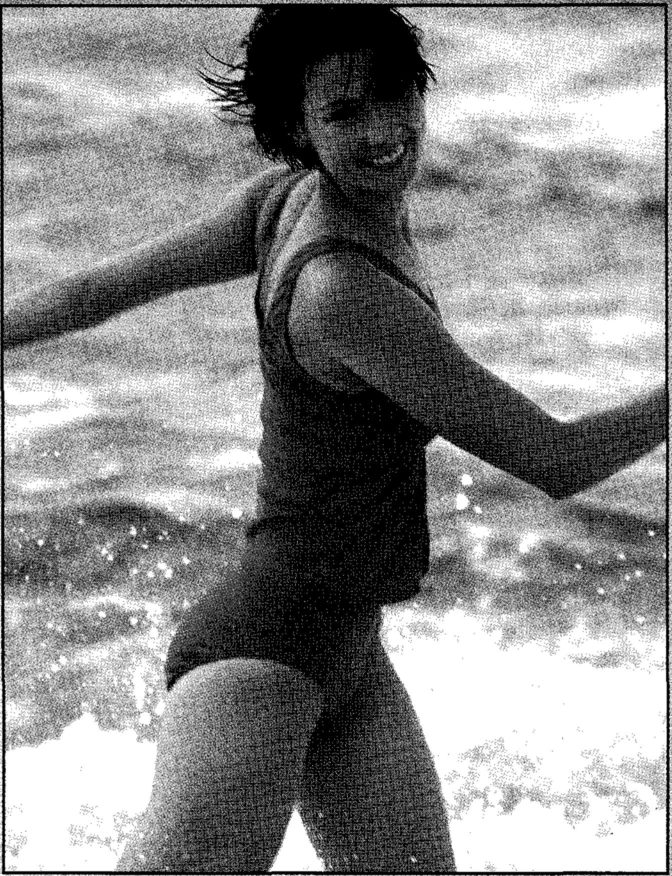

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ners being cheated on, Leslie Denniston and Ted Pejovich strike a nice, detached comic tone. But as the writer and his muse, Simon Brooking and Hope Chernov speak their lines in such damn earnest that you wish the director, Kent Paul, had decided to paint them in more farcical colors. In 2001, after all, the "death of irony" lasted only about five minutes. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-9434. Closes April 7.)

OKLAHOMA!
Trevor Nunn's West End production of the 1943 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. (4/1/02) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

QED
Peter Parnell's play, starring Alan Alda as the physicist Richard Feynman, buzzes with life. Set in 1986—the year of the Challenger explosion, whose causes Feynman helped to investigate—"QED" takes us through an afternoon and evening in Feynman's office at Caltech, where he talks about such subjects as photons, drumming, the Manhattan Project, cancer, and "South Pacific." Alda's performance, which makes much use of that scrunchy-eyed smile of his, is one of utter charm. Sundays and Mondays only. (11/26/01) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

SMELL OF THE KILL
Michele Lowe's comedy involves three wives, their three unloving husbands, and a meat locker. Christopher Ashley is the director. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SURVIVING GRACE
A play by Trish Vradenburg, about a fraught mother-and-daughter relationship. Illeana Douglas and Doris Belack star. Jack Hofsiss directs. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-7171.)

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS
This new musical, adapted from the excellent Clifford Odets–Ernest Lehman movie (1957) by a high-powered artistic team headed by the director Nicholas Hytner, is pitched at a level of ambition comparable to its subject's. The notion of New York as a playground was propagated by Broadway's gossip columnists, and especially by Walter Winchell, whose insatiable, driven personality makes him perfect material for the Broadway musical and who was the inspiration for the character J. J. Hunsecker (played by the expert John Lithgow). At first glance, "Sweet Smell" seems to have got it right. Bob Crowley's behemoth gray skyscrapers loom over the stage, turning it into a kind of concrete canyon that resounds with the echo of rumor. John Guare, who wrote the book, has a clear bead on the material's potent mixture of comic and craven. Unfortunately, the wit of the book is not sustained in Marvin Hamlisch's soft, undistinguished score and Craig Carnelia's flat lyrics. (3/25/02) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

36 VIEWS
Naomi Iizuka's drama about the discovery of a priceless Japanese pillow book and its effects on the academic art community. Directed by Mark Wing-Davey. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

WHAT THE HELL'S YOUR PROBLEM: AN EVENING WITH DR. BOB NATHELSON
Tom Noonan's latest play, about a television self-help guru whose books include "You Made Your Parents Hate You." (Paradise, 64 E. 4th St. 206-1515.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

"Subirdia," part of the Headlong Dance Theatre's program at the Duke.

LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.

THE SYRINGA TREE
Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

EIFMAN BALLET OF ST. PETERSBURG
April 3-4 at 8: "Red Giselle." ♦ April 5 at 8, April 6 at 2 and 8, and April 7 at 2 and 7: "Don Juan and Molière." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Through April 14.)

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH
April 2 at 8: The opening gala. ♦ April 3-4 at 8: "Theatre," "Pacific Dances," and "Juke Box." ♦ April 5 at 8: "Straw Hearts," "Behold the Man," and "Doo Dah Day." ♦ April 6 and April 9 at 8: "Contra Pose," "Yo Johann," "Lincoln Portrait," and "Pacific Dances." ♦ April 7 at 2: "Straw Hearts," "Behold the Man," and "Pacific Dances." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through May 5.)

HEADLONG DANCE THEATRE
"Subirdia," one of the latest creations of this sweetly antic Philadelphia troupe, takes place in a cardigan-carrying, pool-partying, late-fifties suburb. Very familiar turf, in many ways—except that these suburbanites are birds. "They've settled for picket-fenced yards when they can fly," Headlong's co-director David Brick says. "And they look up to the sky for satellites and yearn for flight." Two of them, a Sputnik spaceman and a divorced lady bird, dance a duet with the tragic flutter of "Swan Lake." The program also includes "Gracelessness," a piece that Brick says came out of "the other, more serious side of us." In it, the usual directives of contact improvisation ("fall," "catch," "over here," "here," "here!") take on a post-9/11 gravity. (Dance Theatre Workshop at the Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 924-0077. April 4-6 at 8 and April 7 at 3.)

"ONE AND ONLY YOU"
When the choreographer Susan Marshall set out to create this noirish dance-drama with her husband, the novelist Christopher Renino, she was thinking about "how, in writing or choreographing, as in detective work, there's constant revisiting and reworking, but, in life, we don't get to work at the same scene over and over again until we get it right or discard it." The smart tragicomedy slips easily from the doings of a tough-guy detective to the kitchen, where his ambitious creator loses track of both his life and his wife in his efforts to capture the private eye in words. With the New York trio Liminal providing lounge-lizard sound and Isaiah Sheffer, the artistic director of Symphony Space, in a spirited cameo as a meddlesome literary critic. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. April 4-6 at 8.)

"LUCINDA CHILDS: SOLOS"
The minimalist presents three solos. The first, "Dance #4," from 1979, features a Philip Glass score and a film by Sol LeWitt. "Description (of a Description)," from 2000, is set to a text by Susan Sontag. The final work, "Underwater," was created

RUBEN TOLEDO

in collaboration with Glass and Robert Wilson. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. April 3-6 at 8. Through April 20.)

REGGIE WILSON/FIST AND HEEL PERFORMANCE GROUP
The choreographer calls his evening of performances "The Tie-Tongued Goat and the Lightning Bug Who Tried to Put Her Foot Down," and it includes three works: "Big Brick—a Man's Piece," for four men, "Introduction," which turns from a lecture about Wilson's personal history and choreographic research into a revelation of secret rituals of the African diaspora, and "Rise, Sally Rise," for a trio of women. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. April 4-6 at 8:30 and April 7 at 7:30.)

"LOVE CYCLES: DANCES OF INTIMATE AFFAIRS"
The choreographer Chris DC Ramos charts the progress of an affair from first romance to rewarding relationship. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 334-7479. April 5-7 at 8.)

REGINA NEJMAN
The Brazilian choreographer presents "Maria Vai Com as Outras (Maria Who Follows the Others)." (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 924-0077. April 4-5 at 9 and April 6-7 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
Now in his eighties, Joe Buskin, the unashamedly old-school pianist and composer ("Oh Look at Me Now," "A Hot Time in the Town of Berlin"), did time in the trenches with Eddie Condon, Benny Goodman, Louis Prima, and Bing Crosby. Among those turning out to pay homage to him are the pianist Bill Charlap, the bassist Jay Leonhart, and the guitarist Howard Alden. The unstoppable honoree will also perform. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. April 4 at 8.)

JOE STRUMMER
The former front man and gritty raconteur of the Clash makes the transatlantic hop, along with his current band, the Mescaleros. Continuing where "Sandinista!" and "Combat Rock" left off, the Mescaleros, a kind of emphatic punk-rock/world-music outfit, traffic in sounds from all over the map ("witch-doctor bells," Jamaican dub grooves, and Celtic fiddles, for example), and, as on those two great albums, these influences are placed in context and augment rather than overwhelm the songwriting. Most refreshing are the intelligent, politically conscious lyrics. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. April 4-6 at 8.)

"JAZZ AT THE PENTHOUSE"
Cuban piano calls on its own wily mix of classical extravagance, folk idioms, and jazz inflections. Three keyboard masters—Paquito Hechavarria, Adrian Iaies, and Arturo O'Farrill—demonstrate what we up north have only begun to appreciate in a post-Buena Vista Social Club world. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 721-6500. April 4-6 at 8.)

SUM 41
Yet another band of youngsters with spiky hair and skateboard gear capitalizing on the pop-punk revival instigated by Green Day nearly a decade ago, Sum 41 follows Blink-182 (numerals, apparently, are an integral part of the gambit) in a campaign to homogenize a once adventurous genre. To their credit, this Canadian outfit augments the formula with flourishes of hip-hop and heavy metal, but that's hardly a bold innovation. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. April 5 at 7:30.)

"THE SOUNDS OF SCIENCE"
Yo La Tengo, the Hoboken indie-rock band with a flair for crisp, three-minute pop songs as well as broad feedback experiments, perform live scores to "How Some Jellyfishes Are Born," "Shrimp Stories," "The Love Life of the Octopus," and other short films by Jean Painlevé. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. April 6 at 6:30 and 9.)

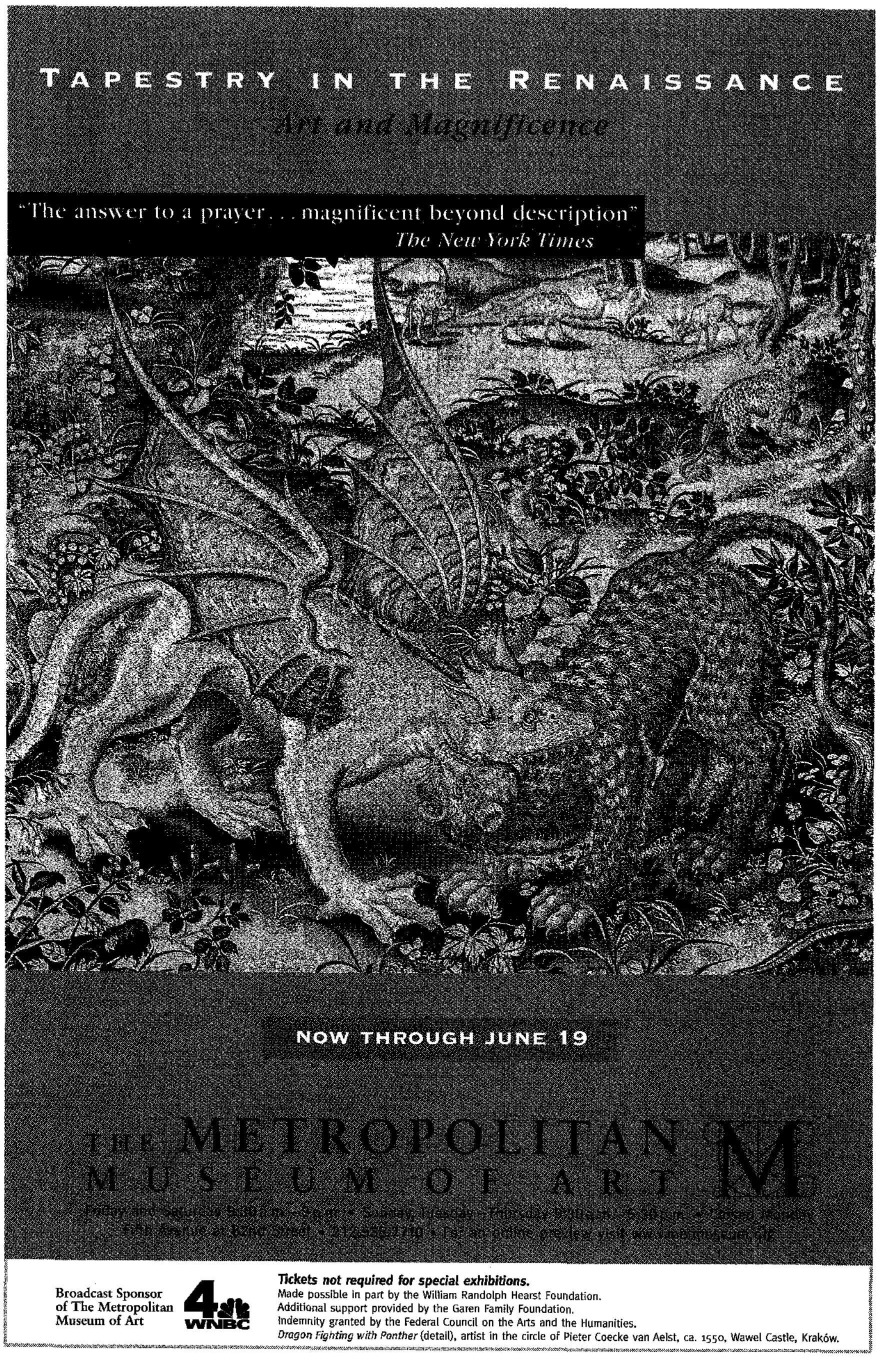
CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—April 4: The folk and blues legend **Odetta.** April 5-6: The **Monkees.** With original members Peter Tork and Michael Nesmith sitting this round out, Davy Jones and Micky Dolenz (the vocalists behind "Daydream Believer" and "Pleasant Valley Sunday," respectively) continue to milk the udders of nostalgia.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—April 2 and April 4: Appearing onstage in antiseptic hospital scrubs, Liverpool's **Clinic** signal their independence from the grubby world of contemporary rock music. And, indeed, their percussion-driven ballads, disguised as art punk, sound like no other band, thanks, in part, to their front man, Ade Blackburn, whose muffled but piercing vocals project a simultaneous yearning and contempt. April 5-8: The latest belles of the indie-rock ball, the **White Stripes** are two characters from Detroit who, in the fine tradition of the Ramones, break rock down to its rudimentary elements. Instead of using punky power chords, however, Jack and Meg White cram fragments of blues, folk, garage rock, and modish pop into a deceptively simple guitar-drum-and-vocal-driven format that is both Spartan and emotive. And their wildly eclectic performances are spawning a nation of zealous followers.

BROWNIES
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—April 4: The **Mendoza Line,** a literate sextet from Brooklyn by way of Athens, Georgia, makes beautiful country-esque music in a "Lost Weekend" vein. This show is in celebration of its fourth album, "Lost in Revelry." With the crystalline country of **Knife in the Water,** an Austin, Texas, outfit that takes its name from the haunting 1962 Polansky film. The local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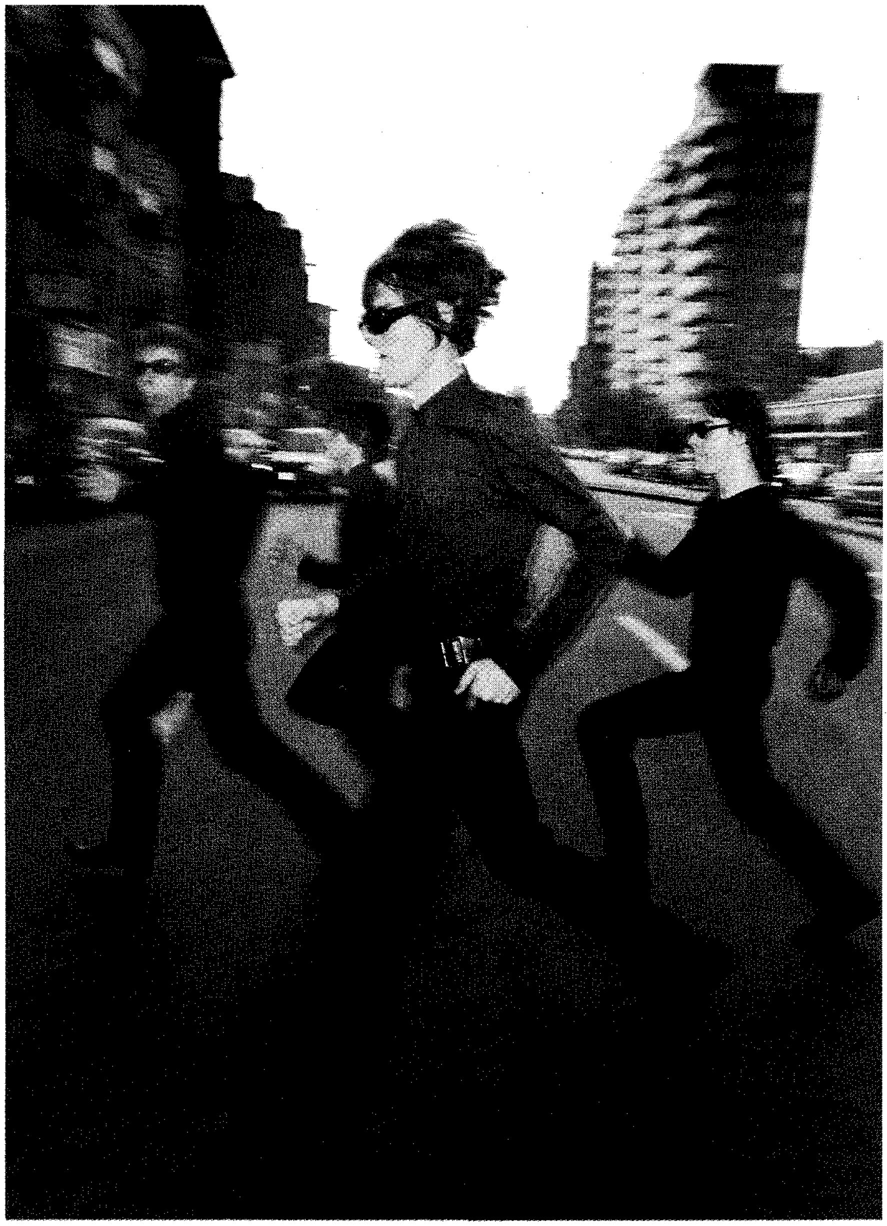
Dragon Fighting with Panther (detail), artist in the circle of Pieter Coecke van Aelst, ca. 1550, Wawel Castle, Kraków.



The local foursome the Mooney Suzuki invade the Knitting Factory this week.

MATTHIAS CLAMER

power trio **Shelby** and **The Red and the Black,** a band born out of the ashes of the indie-rock group Haywood, are the opening acts. April 5: The **Bottle Rockets,** a hirsute combo from Festus, Missouri, have mastered the Sturm und Twang of deep-fried rock and roll. April 6: **Hasil Adkins,** who's been cranking out adrenaline-fuelled Appalachian rockabilly since the days of the Eisenhower Administration, tops off a night of healthily demented rock and roll, featuring the **Demolition Doll Rods,** an all-girl trio (with a transvestite guitarist named Danny) from Detroit, and **American Death Ray,** from Memphis.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—April 6: The **Walkmen** produce rock that has at once an enigmatic, funereal quality and a pop glow. With the shimmering sounds of the **Wolves.** April 9: The **Mooney Suzuki** seem to have emerged, Austin Powers-like, from a time warp, so convincing is their take on the driving, fuzz- and R. & B.-heavy exuberance of the British Invasion. The youths behind the mikes rip up the stage with an energetic live show that recalls the early Who. They're out touring in support of their latest release, "Electric Sweat."

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—April 6: **Nina Nastasia,** a singer-songwriter with an achingly lonesome voice and a dark, dark sensibility. The noted producer Steve Albini recorded her new album, "The Blackened Air." The record, which is layered with cello, accordion, violin, and guitar, covers such subjects as graveyards, desert flies, and ugly faces.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-5252)—April 9-10: The Dayton-based combo **Guided by Voices.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through April 29: If **Dave Frishberg** didn't write such clever songs he'd be better known as a pianist (his sly, offhand piano turns are as sharp as his wit). But then we wouldn't have such gems as "My Attorney Bernie," "Van Lingle Mungo" (a sports paean with lyrics comprised of vintage baseball players' names), or "Peel Me a Grape," his not quite feminist anthem, which is presumably bringing him handsome royalties thanks to Diana Krall. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through April 7: **Lee Konitz** and **Phil Woods** each play bop-inspired alto saxophone, but that's where the similarities end on this intriguing double bill. Konitz often displays diffident phrasing and low-key daring that have made him a sui-generis improviser. He exalts in free-form dissections of standards, particularly when in the company of two equally intrepid players, the pianist **Paul Bley** and the bassist **Marc Johnson.** Woods, who is here with his quintet, is a grab-you-by-the-collar soloist, who gives heartfelt but never slavish thanks to Charlie Parker in every one of his rounded and brilliantly executed passages.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters and wraparound murals. Through April 13: The Broadway baby **Melissa Errico,** who's gone from a teen-age Cosette in "Les Misérables" to the lead in an upcoming Kennedy Center production of "Sunday in the Park with George," offers a program of works by Stephen Sondheim, Michel Legrand, Randy Newman (a specialty of hers, as it turns out), and others. The pianist Lee Musiker, the dean of accompanists, lends a hand. ♦ Across the hall, in the Bemelmans Bar, **Barbara Carroll** is in attendance.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through April 20: The vocalist **Lillias White,** who walked off with a Tony and a slew of other prestigious theatre awards in 1997 for her star turn in "The Life," was most recently heard in the concert version and subsequent recording of "Dreamgirls." For this engagement, the natural performer presents a program of Broadway and jazz standards, backed by the blue-chip support of the pianist James Williams, the guitarist Phil Hamilton, the bassist Ron Carter, and the drummer Grady Tate. Dining.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through April 7: The **Greg Osby** quartet. Osby is the modern bandleader to put your money on. He's an altoist with his own sound—bright and metallic-toned, with a rhythmic energy that follows its own skewed metronome—and he's fast becoming the Art Blakey of his day, collecting a coterie of bright young players around him. The most dazzling of them all may be the pianist **Jason Moran,** a wily, unpredictable improviser who meshes perfectly with Osby, and who is the next major jazz talent to watch closely, judging from the evidence of his own recent recording, "Black Stars." Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (242-1063)—April 5: **Marc Copland,** a sterling pianist whose trio recordings reveal his sensitive touch and acute harmonic perspective, and his trio. April 6: Last year's vital quartet recording by **Vijay Iyer,** "Panoptic Modes," gave notice that both the pianist and his saxophonist **Rudresh Mahanthappa** were new-jazz provocateurs with fresh ideas. Mahanthappa's own quartet, featuring Iyer, the bassist **François Moutin,** and the percussionist **Elliot Huberto Kavee,** holds great promise.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through April 7: It's been eight years since the transplanted South African pianist **Abdullah Ibrahim** convened his large ensemble, Ekaya, here in New York. For those who were lucky enough to witness this roof-raising, Ellingtonesque unit's regular shows at venues like the now defunct Sweet Basil, it's been far too long. Dining.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—April 5-6: The **Billy Harper** quintet. The seventies had their share of Coltrane-inspired tenorists with imperious tones and volcanic energy, but something—poetry, perhaps—always set Harper apart. His recent work with Randy Weston and with his own electrifying group has proved that he's still in touch with the muse.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through April 7: Hard bop may be the lingua franca of the present-day jazz mainstream, but not everyone speaks it with the comfort and fluency of the brawny-toned tenor saxophonist **Eric Alexander.** For his return visit as a leader to the most noteworthy basement in jazzdom, Alexander fronts a group of like-minded peers—the trumpeter **Jim Rotondi,** the pianist **David Hazeltine,** the bassist **Peter Wash-**

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ington, and the drummer **Kenny Washington.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence."** The aptly titled show features forty-one sumptuous examples of magnificence woven between 1420 and 1560, including "The Unicorn Defends Itself," from the Met's own Cloisters, along with three panels from the ten-part "Acts of the Apostles," designed by Raphael for the Sistine Chapel, and all four sections of the "Alba Passion" cycle, shown together here for the first time since 1877. Much can be learned about fifteenth-century weaving technology (a skilled craftsman working in the finest silks and metal-wrapped threads might complete half a square yard per month) and the similarities of Netherlandish and Italian styles. But nothing can compare to the iris-hued and opalescent shimmer of the tapestries themselves, which seem one with the myths and fabulous figures they so often illustrate. Through June 19. ♦ **"Surrealism: Desire Unbound"** is a big, fairly resistible show, with scattered delights, that labors to pump up the long-deflated blimp of Surrealism with a panting emphasis on sex. There's fine work by Picasso, Miró, and Giacometti, but the more orthodox dream illustrations of Dali, Ernst, and so on look more tired than ever. The show's strong suits are erotic photography and drawing; its man of the hour is Hans Bellmer, the weird German whose indelibly shocking photos of anatomically preposterous female dolls are back in vogue these days. Through May 5. ♦ **"Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi: Father and Daughter Painters in Baroque Italy."** Virtually the only woman painter among the fraternity of Old Masters, Artemisia Gentileschi has inspired novels, films, and a current play, thanks in part to speculation about her romantic misfortunes. She was a painter of great and often grisly refinement, as this dual survey makes clear. Like Caravaggio, who inspired their realist style, the Gentileschis didn't skimp on skin, gold, velvet, or violence; Artemisia's depiction of Judith modelling a low-cut blue gown as she beheads a struggling Holofernes is a cleavage picture in both senses. Through May 12. ♦ **"Earthly Bodies: Irving Penn's Nudes, 1949-50."** Through April 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting."** Gerhard Richter has worked in many styles since 1961, when he escaped from East Germany. They include mordant variations on Pop art, hauntingly beautiful Photo-Realist paintings in several genres, abstracts that convey self-doubt with panache, and a fifteen-canvas masterpiece of history painting, about the deaths in 1977 of Baader-Meinhof terrorists who had convulsed Germany for a decade. Previously seen piecemeal here, his art has struck many as tricky and cold, but it turns out that it aches with emotion. Richter's love of painting, in a tense relationship with his fierce skepticism, generates sustained intellectual drama with regular bonuses of rapture. This show may redraw the map of painting's place in the wider culture. Through May 21. ♦ **"Life of the City."** The museum offers a belated and somewhat misguided valentine to New York City in a show that combines photographs of the city from the permanent collection with an ever-changing installation of images solicited from amateurs. (Guidelines for participation are detailed in an attendant brochure.) Through May 21. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—After the black walls and visual cacophony of the Brazilian extravaganza that precedes it, Rachel Whiteread's massive sculptural installation fills the museum's top-floor galleries like a silent lament. Whiteread is an impresario of the inside out, and here she's cast the interior of her London studio and home, a fifties-era building that previously served as a synagogue and a warehouse. The resulting behemoth, which invokes both the sacred and the mundane, is devoid of architectural detail, except for the occasional heating duct or electrical outlet. The effect is at once obdurate and illusory. A second, smaller sculpture is more of a visual quip: a cast of the stairs to the building's basement, it looks like a ziggurat on a bender. Through June 5. ♦ **"Brazil: Body and Soul."** Through May 29. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The 2002 Biennial is a vast, pleasant, rather drab affair, made up of predominantly earnest, unambitious works by a hundred and thirteen artists and collaborative teams on four floors of the museum and in Central Park, where you can find a fifty-foot steel elm tree. The show's New Age-ish curator Lawrence R. Rinder declares that today's young American artists crave "some greater role than mere decoration or ironic critique." His Biennial bunch achieves something decidedly lesser, on the whole, with gimmicky audio and computer works, self-indulgent installations, and a great many unsurprising video projections. ("Vita brevis, video longa," one observer remarked.) Serious painting and sculpture are scarce. Momentary relief arrives in the form of memorable pieces by Vija Celmins, Chan Chao, Stephen Dean, and Lorna Simpson. Through May 26. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS
548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—The second half of Roni Horn's installation, which looks entirely different even though it retains three pieces from the original. And it somehow manages to be understated and monumental at the same time. The show, with its suites of piercingly detailed color-saturated photographs, amounts to a meditation on doubling and minute differences. The theme is taken up by her pictures of clouds in bright-blue skies, clownish or deadpan portraits, puddles, and a pair of icelike sculptures in cast glass. The exhibition's title, which misquotes the Gershwins, both mocks and honors this rhyming instinct: **"Blah, blah, blah, blah, moon, / Blah, blah, blah, above; / Blah, blah, blah, blah, croon, / Blah, blah, blah, blah, love."** Through June 16. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GROLIER CLUB
47 E. 60th St. (838-6690)—**"The Play's the Thing: Theatrical Manuscripts and Prompt Books from the Harvard Theater Collection."** This vast enterprise, which started in 1901, is one of the oldest and largest of its kind, with holdings of manuscripts, hand-annotated prompt books, playbills, scores, and other backstage ephemera. From Fanny Kemble and Sarah Siddons to Cole Porter and Tennessee Williams, the great names appear not as celebrities at curtain call but as working artists sweating out some exact phrase or bit of business. There are a few objects, like Edmund Kean's pound-of-flesh-slicing knife from his famous turn as Shylock. But most of the material is bibliographic: Wilde's corrections to "An Ideal Husband," for example, or the original Ford's Theatre handbill announcing Laura Keene in "Our American Cousin." Through April 27. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—**"A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City"** documents several waves of Middle Eastern immigration, from the Ottoman refugees who built a Little Syria near Wall Street in the late eighteen-hundreds to a young National Guardsman deployed at Ground Zero. "Arabs Smiling," a bulletin board full of local snapshots, is bluntly emotional but effective, like a long-distance commercial. Through Sept. 1. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

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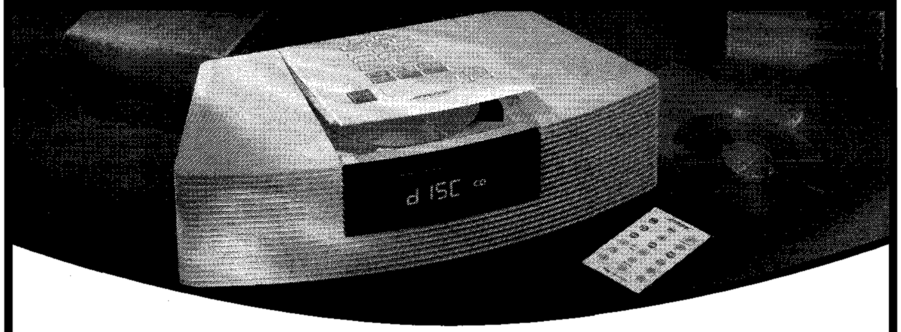

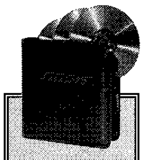

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GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JAY DE FEO
This mini-retrospective focusses on the years before and after the late Bay Area artist (and Beat Generation bigwig) created her much vaunted, rarely seen painting, "The Rose," a one-ton accretion of pigment that consumed her career from 1958 until 1966. (The piece is now in the permanent collection of the Whitney Museum.) By far the strongest early work here is "Song of Innocence," a small canvas from 1957. Its mosaic of impasto brushstrokes and radial imagery presage the dense alchemy that followed. Also noteworthy are two drawings of swim goggles from 1977, deftly infusing the mundane with mysticism. Through May 4. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082.)

JANE FREILICHER
In the fifties, when members of the New York School began to hang out on Long Island, Jane Freilicher—along with pals like Fairfield Porter, and the poet and art critic Frank O'Hara—turned for inspiration to the beaches and marshes outside her window, the sun-soaked flowers on her table, and the general atmosphere of genteel Bohemia in which they all took part. Freilicher is still making such pictures, juxtaposing crashing waves and blooming plants with affectionate portraits of the Manhattan rooftops that are her city view. These twenty-four canvases and works on paper (all done in the last two years) are soothing like the memories of old haunts and cheerful like the chintz slipcovers of a country house—but not much more demanding. Through April 27. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

ARSHILE GORKY
Uneasily situated between the war-torn Armenia of his youth and the burgeoning New York art world of the thirties and forties, where he made his career, Gorky is a tragic figure in whom multiple currents mix: traces of early Picasso and mid-period Matisse are visible in these portraits of friends, family, self, and fantasized figures. They're incisive psychological sketches tinged with an abstract angst, but they also emit something of the dire luminosity perfected by Gorky's student Mark Rothko. In particular, the show offers for comparison the two great portraits titled "The Artist and His Mother," iconic studies of Oedipal mourning on which Gorky labored intermittently for a decade. Through April 27. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 744-2313.)

ZBIGNIEW LIBERA
This small-time mimic of mass production is responsible for both "You Can Shave the Baby," the hirsute doll who co-stars in this exhibit, and "A Different Type of Prison," the controversial Lego death camp at the Jewish Museum's "Mirroring Evil." A suite of photographs here, documenting the mass execution, dismemberment, and burial of shiny Lego figures by smiling Lego soldiers, succeeds on Libera's terms, if not the viewer's. He seems happiest when his work can be confused with educational merchandise. Through April 27. (American-European Fine Art, 1100 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. 517-4010.)

CAMERON MARTIN
A stark, beautiful show of reductive landscape paintings. Martin strips nature down to essentials—trees, water, rocks—devoting each canvas to a single subject. Sky has a recurring cameo, too, sneaking in as the flat field of lemon surrounding a truncated plane tree or shimmering alongside a rock pile. One by one the pictures convey both the ache of isolation and the rapture of solitude. Through April 20. (Artemis Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444.)

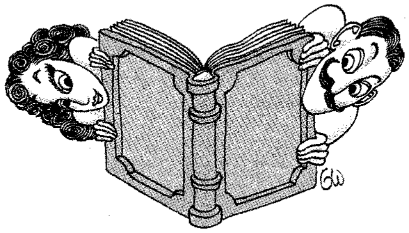
DAVID SCHORR
Schorr's plaid canvases are inspired by, and woven in, India, although most come off more Maine than Madras. The cloth on which he draws and paints is *khadi*, a homespun championed by Gandhi; the cropped figures who people his work wear it as saris, dhotis, and lungis, often in a fashionable pattern that matches his plaid canvas. Schorr, a costume designer, treats his subjects as models of enviable free-

GAHAN WILSON

BOOK CURRENTS

Porn Yesterday

In **THE EROTOMANIAC** (Da Capo), Ian Gibson investigates the life of Henry Spencer Ashbee, a respectable Victorian merchant who collected thousands of volumes of pornography spanning several centuries and languages. Gibson believes that Ashbee was also the author of "My Secret Life," a notorious piece of Victorian pornography, reasoning, rather unflatteringly, that "it is a tale by someone who has not found erotic fulfillment, by someone for whom sex exists almost entirely in the head."



Of course, if we're to believe Freud, the impulse to collect is largely sexual anyway. Alfred Kinsey, before he embarked on his sex research, was a zoologist, and he collected millions of gall wasps in an attempt to log every variation in the species. Later, he switched to erotica; the editors of **SEX AND HUMOR: SELECTIONS FROM THE KINSEY INSTITUTE** (Indiana) gather some of the more lighthearted items from the collection—kooky pinups, dirty postcards, and comics—to illuminate their thesis that social taboos have forced people to "use humor to speak about sex."

There is no shortage of humor in the erotic art of Tomi Ungerer, whose wild imaginings include "Fornicon," a set of contraptions that look like a pornographic remake of "Metropolis." In **EROTOSCOPE** (Taschen), a selection from four decades of drawings, Ungerer claims that he comes from a repressive Protestant background. This doesn't seem to have limited the amount of lewdness he can pack into a few swooping lines. Curiously, his artistic tastes seem to have dictated his sexual ones, rather than the other way around. His S & M kink reflects his love of shapes: tie a woman up, he explains, and "she becomes more fluid, and the pencil that draws her flows more easily across the paper."

—Leo Carey

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and more

AND: A calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country

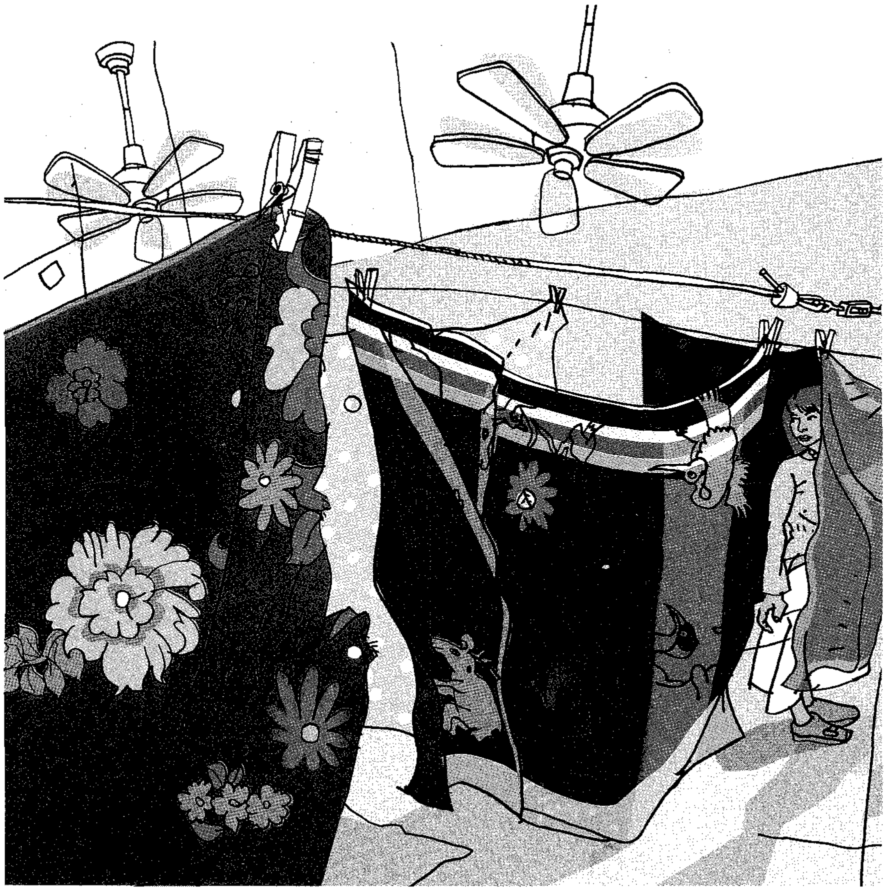
dom, as if he envied the panache with which they wear their loincloths. Through April 13. (Mary Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669.)

Short List

NANCY GRAVES
Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.
Through April 27.
FRANZ KLINE
McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 688-5951.
Through April 20.
DEVORAH SPERBER
James Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St.
535-5767. Through April 6.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BURES MILLER
Last summer, visitors to the Venice Biennale stood in line for hours to nab one of the sixteen seats in this miniaturized cinema. But the noirish film the artists present (imagine Raymond Chandler's version of "The English Patient") is less impressive than the astonishing sound production. As a cell phone rings in the dark, popcorn is munched annoyingly close to your ear and someone whispers, "Did you check the stove before we left?" You may forget you're wearing headphones and admonish your innocent neighbor. Through April 27. (Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100.)



"A Mirror Woman," an installation by Kim Sooja, at Blum.

MARY MC DONNELL
McDonnell's shimmery oil abstractions painted on wood squares have an appealing indeterminacy—the moods they evoke, like the colors they're made with, are strong and subtly and obsessively layered. The gauzy light they create can summon a landscape—wintry seashore, rural dawn, a traveller's afternoon—that you know but can't quite place. With a few exceptions (Pat Steir, Brice Marden), this sort of layered, meditative work has fallen out of fashion lately. McDonnell reminds us why it shouldn't. Through April 6. (The Viewing Room, 114 W. 17th St. 646-638-1920.)

ELIZABETH MURRAY
In Murray's boisterous still-lifes and interiors, kiddie cartoons meet Matisse. A biomorphic blip of a foot tiptoes down a bright-green staircase. Elsewhere, an eyeball the color of algae lurks near a wobbly stack of pink and yellow mugs. Murray's fractured, elastic world is as indebted to kid stuff as it is to synthetic Cubism, so her use of collage here is equal parts pop-up book and Picasso. Through April 27. (Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 929-7000.)

JULIAN SCHNABEL
Flagrant bravado in the form of six big paintings (most are fourteen feet high) all based on a single thrift-store portrait the artist bought fifteen years ago. Schnabel alters the original image—a blond girl in a blue dress with a white collar—mostly by eliding her eyes with a horizontal whoosh of paint. With one exception (a Clairol moment where our colossal cutie goes brunette), the variations are minimal—a chin cleft deepens, cheeks flush rosier—and the flourish of wax-laden brushstrokes isn't enough to stave off tedium. Through April 20. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.)

Short List

UGO RONDINONE
Matthew Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.
Through April 20.
T. J. WILCOX
Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.
Through April 13.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

WIM DELVOYE
Wim Delvoye's "Marble Floors" appear to be just that—large color photographs of inlaid baroque and Islamic stonework patterns, shot head on in crisp focus and concentrating on geometric delicacies and rosy hues. Except that Delvoye's veined and shiny marbles are actually slices of lunch meat: ham, salami, and bologna, precision cut and laid out as mosaics. The work is an elaborate one-liner, with a little paradox on the side: flesh becomes stone, and cold artisanry turns into a practical joke (imagine dancing on them). "Marble Floors" runs concurrently with Delvoye's "Cloaca" at the New Museum, a pristine machine for turning food into the ultimate Freudian art product. Through April 27. (Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St. 431-3685.)

KIM SOOJA
Mirrors line the gallery walls, reflecting scores of parti-colored silk bedcovers strung on rows of clothesline by clothespins. (The artist salvaged the textiles in her native South Korea, where newlyweds traditionally use them to symbolize good fortune.) The fabric sways in a breeze provided by overhead fans to an accompanying soundtrack of chanting monks and ringing bells that lends a beatific air to the installation. Associations drift from the mundane to the profound, as a cheery laundry day gives way to an infinite labyrinth of bliss. Through May 18. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441.)

Short List

VANESSA BEECROFT
Deitch Projects, 18 Wooster St. 343-7300.
Through April 27.
NANCY BURSON
Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E.
998-6780. Through April 20.
ELLEN GALLAGHER
Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166.
Through April 18.

PHOTOGRAPHY

MARCO BREUER
Process is paramount in this young German artist's photograms. He has burned, sprayed, spit at, and dripped on black-and-white photographic paper—but never used a camera—over the last ten years. This time out, he goes for color. He might fold, sand, or expose the paper; the results can look like polka-dotted wallpaper, Gerhard Richter's abstractions, or PCR gels done in the laboratory. Through April 20. (Roth Horowitz, 160A E. 70th St. 717-9067.)

JEANNE DUNNING
Taking navel-gazing to the next level, Dunning photographs fifteen people, each of whom bares his or her stomach and places a magnifying glass over the belly button. Black, white, fat, slim, the subjects dutifully pose for the camera, in a sort of PG version of Beth B's vulva portraits. While the press material claims that the navel is "the ultimate, intimate interface between inner and outer, private and public, hidden and visible," in fact it's usually pretty dark in there. The most revealing parts—the fingernails and visible scraps of clothing—seem like accidents. Through April 13. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

ALFRED EISENSTAEDT
Eisenstaedt, the photographer of the famous V-J Day kiss in Times Square, shot for sixty years for *Life* magazine all over the world. This greatest-hits exhibit, with memorable images of the Kennedys, Marlene Dietrich, and Josephine Baker, is a bit of a guilty pleasure. His softie journalism leaves one feeling misty for bygone eras. Two images called "A Soldier's Farewell," offering a little-seen glimpse of the old Penn Station (along with the soldier and the girl he's leaving behind), epitomize what Eisenstaedt does best. Through April 6. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051.)

LISETTE MODEL
Model came to New York for a visit in the late thirties and stayed a lifetime. The city became her muse. Most of these photographs, taken in jazz clubs in the fifties, have never been shown to the public. And the exuberant images—of Ella Fitzgerald or Louis Armstrong belting, of Willie (the Lion) Smith chomping a cigar at the piano, of a woman in an evening gown lost in thought next to Stan Getz—will ap-

OLIVIER KUGLER

peal to both jazz and photography fans. Through April 27. (Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

HANNO OTTEN

Otten gives a thoughtful twist to color-field abstraction with his cameraless photos, made in the darkroom by manipulating the color dials on the enlarger. The minimal compositions are actually quite lush, making for a fascinating photographic counterpoint to the Philadelphia Museum of Art's Barnett Newman show. Through April 20. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.)

WEEGEE

These far from nostalgic images summon the sheer weirdness and energy of New York City: a couple of swells and a bag lady sharing a cigarette on the Bowery, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor guffawing at a circus act, a lone police officer stuck in a shadowy doorway. A few of the shots may bring back the rent party—they look like a lot of fun. Through May 17. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

JEFF WHETSTONE

A lonely foot creeps down a ladder toward a swimming hole while something splashes in the distance. Another swimmer? An alligator? An empty lawn chair at the very edge of a steamy pond begs the question: did its last occupant slip into the muck or simply go home for dinner? Whetstone's début show of eerie, beautiful printed black-and-whites tweaks Sally Mann's romanticized South. Through April 30. (Onefront, 11 E. 12th St. 727-8174.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—**"Rise of the Picture Press: Photographic Reportage in Illustrated Magazines, 1918-1939"** and **"Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith's Pittsburgh Photographs."** Through June 16. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

PETER FISCHLI AND DAVID WEISS
Matthew Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.
Through April 20.

SIMEN JOHAN
Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 414-0370.
Through April 6.

HELEN LEVITT
Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.
Through April 13.

RICHARD MISRACH
Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600.
Through April 27.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG
Pace MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.
Through April 6.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S

April 3 at 10 A.M.: The monthly "House Sale," a chance for buyers to peruse a wide range of furniture, porcelain, drawings, prints, silver, and other decorative items. ♦ April 8 at 2: "Fine European and Oriental Carpets." ♦ April 8 at 2 and April 9 at 10 A.M. and 2: "Magnificent Jewels," an auction of diamonds, colored gemstones, and contemporary jewelry. A pair of cushion-shaped Art Deco diamond ear pendants (expected to bring approximately three million dollars), each more than twenty carats, leads the sale. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

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OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

Franco Zeffirelli wasn't able to come to New York to supervise the revival of his 1964 production of **"Falstaff,"** but his staging has been so tautly managed that he might as well be pulling the strings from his Roman villa. Verdi's last opera may be the most refined of comedies, but it needs a touch of raw spontaneity, lacking here, to really fly. Still, there is much to enjoy. Zeffirelli's Elizabethan sets and costumes have been painstakingly restored; the orchestra—conducted, a bit too leisurely at times, by James Levine—gives Verdi's counterpoint a velvety tone; and Bryn Terfel, a natural Falstaff, combines psychological acuity with rich and rounded vocalism. Also with fine performances by Camilla Tilling, Marina Mescheriakova, Stephanie Blythe, Susanne Mentzer (a daffy, lovable Meg), and Dwayne Croft. (April 3 at 7:30, April 6 at 1:30, and April 9 at 8 .) ♦ The final performance this season of **"Madama Butterfly,"** with Daniela Dessì, Jane Bunnell, Fabio Armiliato, and William Shimell; the conductor is Marco Armiliato. (April 4 at 7:30.) ♦ Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari's **"Sly"**—originally mounted at the Washington Opera in 1999—is the operatic curiosity of the season. The composer, admired for his diverting comic operas, here attempted a tragic work, loosely based on the induction from "The Taming of the Shrew," and its defenders find it surprisingly powerful. One is Marta Domingo, wife of the tenor Plácido, who directs; her husband takes the title role. Also with Maria Guleghina and Juan Pons; Armiliato. (April 5 and April 8 at 8.) ♦ **"Rigoletto,"** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Frank Lopardo, and Carlo Guelfi (in the title role); Marco Guidarini. (April 6 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

Thor Steingraber's new production of **"Don Giovanni,"** with Virginia Grasso, Sally Wolf, Anna Christy, Brian Davis (in the title role), Raul Hernandez, Michael Wanko, and Marcus DeLoach; George Manahan conducts. (April 3 at 7:30 and April 6 at 1:30.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Paula Rasmussen, Elena Kolganova, William Joyner, and Michael Chiodi; Manahan. (April 4 at 7:30 and April 6 at 8.) ♦ **"Tosca,"** with Anna Shafajinskaia, Gerard Powers, and Jeffrey Kneebone; Steven Mosteller. (April 5 at 8.) ♦ Though not the most renowned of Handel's operas, **"Agrippina,"** which premièred in Venice in 1709, generated so much enthusiasm that it launched his international career. This is City Opera's first performance of the Glimmerglass Opera production, with Brenda Harris (in the title role), Kimberly Barber, Nancy Allen Lundy, David Walker, Ryland Angel, and Gregory Reinhart; Jane Glover. (April 7 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 307-4100.)

THE MONTEVERDI CYCLE: "IL RITORNO D'ULISSE IN PATRIA"

The Brooklyn Academy of Music presents all three of Monteverdi's surviving operas—the bedrock of the repertory—this month, and, while the works obviously share a common Baroque style, they will be represented by three acclaimed, and very different, productions, each from a leading company on tour. William Christie and his exquisite charges, Les Arts Florissants, tackle the first (and least appreciated) of them, an intimate epic of Ulysses's return to Ithaca and his wife, Penelope; the director is the Royal Shakespeare Company's Adrian Noble. "Poppea" and "Orfeo" are still to come, presented, respectively, by Les Talens Lyriques (in its U.S. début) and Chicago Opera Theatre (in its New York début). (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. April 7 at 3 and April 8 at 7:30; through April 14.)

AMATO OPERA

The feisty East Village chamber-opera company presents **"Rigoletto."** (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. April 6 at 7:30 and April 7 at 2:30.)

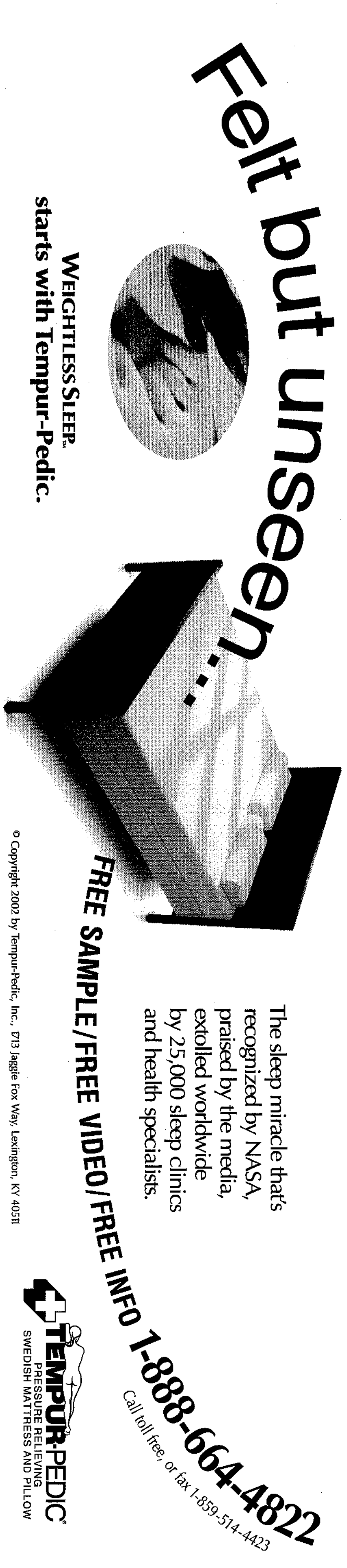
ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Kurt Masur conducts an all-choral program pairing Prokofiev's "Alexander Nevsky" (a cantata adapted from his score for the heroic Eisenstein film) with Mozart's Requiem. Edith Wiens, Nancy Maultsby, Stanford Olsen, and Nathan Berg are the vocal soloists, with the New York Choral Artists assisting. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. April 4-6 at 8.)

JUILLIARD ORCHESTRA AND CHORAL UNION

Beethoven's Mass in C Major—a crisp and buoyant predecessor to the "Missa Solemnis"—is the foun-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dation for a concert of otherwise unusual repertory: Beethoven's rare "Elegiac Song," Op. 118, and the likely U.S. première of "Dein ist das Reich von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit," a choral fugue composed by a twenty-year-old Richard Wagner (and only recently published), whose "Siegfried Idyll" completes the program. Judith Clurman conducts. (Alice Tully Hall. April 5 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

"HANDEL: BEYOND THE MESSIAH"
April 7 at 2: Emma Kirkby, the soprano whose uncommonly pure and crystalline voice has defined Baroque performance for twenty years, is the star of a concert by the chamber ensemble London Baroque, singing (among other works) the "Salve Regina" and two of the "Deutsche Arien." ♦ April 8 at 7:30: Mark Minkowski and Les Musiciens du Louvre add a splash of French repertory (a suite from Rameau's *tragédie lyrique* "Les Boréades") to a concert of vocal works by Handel and Bach (the cantata "Ich habe genug") sung by the mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Two masterworks of Romantic impetuosity, Berlioz's "Rob Roy" Overture and Schumann's Piano Concerto (with Martha Argerich), precede a performance of the original 1911 version of Stravinsky's "Petrouchka." Charles Dutoit conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 8 at 8.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Seiji Ozawa conducts music by John Williams ("For Seiji!," a musical toast) and two works featuring the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (the Dvořák Concerto, and the New York première of Eric Tanguy's Cello Concerto No. 2). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 9-10 at 8.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
April 4 at 6:45: In the first of three hour-long spring concerts, members of Chamber Music Society Two—an ensemble of emerging virtuosos under the guidance of the Society's distinguished members—are featured in music by Kodály and Dvořák (the Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major). The performers include the violinist Timothy Fain, the cellist Alisa Weilerstein, and the pianist Lang Lang. (Rose Rehearsal Studio, 70 Lincoln Center Plaza.) ♦ April 7 at 5 and April 9 at 7:30: During the pianist Charles Wadsworth's two decades as artistic director of the Society, vocal chamber music was a prominent and rewarding aspect of his programming (including premières of notable works by Barber, John Corigliano, and Fred Lerdahl). This year's Wadsworth Concerts—in which he will participate—include both the New York première of Dominick Argento's comedy "Miss Manners on Music" (settings of columns on musical etiquette by the Washington *Post* columnist Judith Martin, with the soprano Phyllis Pancella) and a new version of Saint-Saëns's "Carnival of the Animals" featuring Charles Osgood, who will narrate his own poetry. The assisting musicians include David Shifrin and Anne-Marie McDermott. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788.)

BARGEMUSIC
Three programs coördinated by the violist Toby Hoffman. April 4-5 at 7:30: Hoffman, the pianist Maris Gothoni, and others perform music by Françaix, Debussy, and Fauré (the Piano Quartet in C Minor). ♦ April 6 at 7:30: The guitar playing of Simon Wynberg takes center stage in a program of an inevitably Mediterranean cast (including works by Piazzolla, Paganini, and Sarasate, with the violinist Mark Peskanov). ♦ April 7 at 4: An afternoon of Beethoven, including the Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor (with Paul Ostrovsky). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

CONTINUUM
The ensemble devotes a concert to works by the young Argentine-American Osvaldo Golijov, whose music blends the energy of Latin and Jewish folk music with the intellectual discipline of twentieth-century modernism. Among the works are the world première of "Luce," a vocal work to a text by

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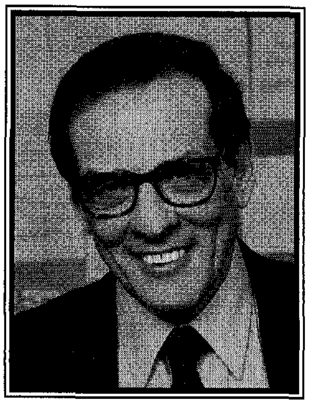
A conversation with

Robert Caro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CLASSICAL NOTES

OLD REMASTERS

In hardly a year, Andante.com, its home page an understated study in black, rose, and beige, has become classical music's most prominent Web site. While many of Andante's services are free, the heart and soul of the business is its upscale record label, an enterprise the company's French founder and president, Alain Coblence, hopes to expand to include three hundred albums during the next decade: "like the Modern Library, or the Pléiade," he says. A typical four-disk set retails at seventy-two dollars, but you get a lot for the price: attractive hardbound covers, edgy liner art, exhaustive program notes, and, thanks to the company's CAP 440 remastering process, state-of-the-art sound.

Coblence has the idealism of an adolescent record collector and the business sense of a venture capitalist; he wants to restore economic and cultural prestige to classical recording at a time when most of the industry is cutting back on new releases. Although the label plans to record contemporary performances, the eleven sets currently available are all of historical recordings (first releases of radio broadcasts, or remasterings of disks from the glory days of 78s), with comparative interpretations being a particular strength. A wonderful set of the four Brahms Symphonies, featuring two performances of each by such conductors as Toscanini, Stokowski, Mengelberg, and Monteux, shows how podium personalities could fill these works with life. A similar set of the Beethoven Piano Concertos lets us savor interpretations by such titans as Artur Rubinstein and Rudolf Serkin along with those by Ania Dorfmann, Marguerite Long, and William Kapell, distinctive artists who never became marquee names or who died young. And a 1930 recording of Gounod's "Faust" testifies to a stylish, unforced manner of French opera singing that seems gone forever.

Some of Andante's releases, however, may end up being too idiosyncratic to appeal to a wide audience: an intriguing album of Stravinsky performing his own music in the nineteen-thirties and forties—before his invaluable assistant Robert Craft came along to supervise his recordings—is wobbly enough to turn a novice off Stravinsky for life. But what we have so far is a feast for connoisseurs, and a lesson in style to performers growing up in an anodyne age.

—*Russell Platt*

Fellini; "Last Round," for string nonet; and "Lúa Descolorida," an excerpt from the mysterious and triumphant "St. Mark" Passion—which is fast on its way to becoming a classic. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. April 4 at 8.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "OUR PRIDE AND JOY"

Over the course of its fourteen seasons, NYFOS has been at the vanguard of the American art-song revival, not only commissioning dozens of songs but presenting them in an exuberant, semi-theatrical format. Its latest recital will feature some of its hardiest progeny, including works by John Musto, Lowell Liebermann ("Appalachian Liebeslieder"), and Ned Rorem (excerpts from his magnum opus, "Evidence of Things Not Seen"). Steven Blier and Michael Barrett, as usual, are the pianists and hosts; the singers include Cynthia Watters, Rinat Shaham, Philip Cutlip, and Steven Tharp. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 4 at 8.)

"INHOUSE" CONCERTS: ROBERT DICK

Most of the great flutists—Galway, Rampal, Pahud—have earned their reputations by combining technical dexterity with luxuriant tones; Robert Dick, however, became a legend among new-music mavens by radically extending the possibilities of his instrument, making it flexible enough to absorb the influences of both Indian ragas and the most advanced electronic sounds. Now a resident of Switzerland, he makes a rare return to the New York scene in a concert of improvisations and written works with the pianist and synthesizer artist Steve Sandberg. (In-House, 474 Greenwich St., just below Canal St. 925-8534. April 5 at 8.)

GUARNERI STRING QUARTET

The pianist Lydia Artymiw joins the ensemble for a concert of Shostakovich (the Piano Quintet), Beethoven, and Debussy (the Quartet in G Minor). (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. April 6 at 8.)

LOCRIAN CHAMBER PLAYERS

The ensemble—which only performs works that are less than a decade old—presents a program featuring music by Ned Rorem (the String Quartet No. 4, one of the most piquant and persuasive of his later works), Lou Harrison, and Nils Vigeland. (Riverside Church Performance Space, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. April 6 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND

Le Refuge, a charming French-style country inn nestled among the yacht slips of City Island, hosts an afternoon of piano trios by Haydn and Brahms (featuring the pianist Joel Wizansky, the violinist Andrea Schulz, and the cellist Wolfram Koessel). (620 City Island Ave., the Bronx. April 7 at 12:30. For information about tickets, call 212-927-9194.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES

Members of the orchestra (including the violinist Hanna Lachert and the harpist Nancy Allen) perform music by Genzmer, Dvořák (the Piano Quartet in D Major), and Paul Schoenfield (the rambunctious "Café Music," for piano trio). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 7 at 3.)

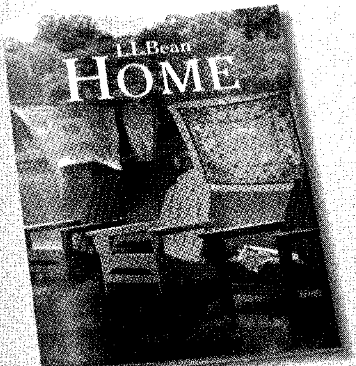
ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

April 3 at 6:30: The "Selected Shorts" series brings in the actors Brian Mallon, Lazaro Perez, and Maria Tucci, for stories by Frank O'Connor, Alice Munro, and Isabel Allende. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) ♦ April 3 at 7: The poets Breyten Breytenbach and Philip Schultz mark the start of National Poetry Month with a reading of their works. (Academy of American Poets, 588 Broadway, between Houston and Prince Sts. 274-0343.) ♦ April 3 at 7:30: Randy Cohen reads from "The Good, the Bad, & the Difference," his collection of "The Ethicist" columns from the *Times Magazine*. (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ April 4 at 6: Hans Koning offers passages from his new novel, "Zeeland, or Elective Concurrences." (Mid-Manhattan Library, Fifth Ave. at 40th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ April 4 at 6:30: James McCourt reads from his 1971 parody of the opera world, "Mawrdew Czgowchwz." (American Irish Historical Society, 991 Fifth Ave., near 80th St. For reservations, which are required, call 288-2263.)

TALKS

April 3 at 6:30: Lee Lowenfish, a baseball historian and writer whose books include "The Imperfect Diamond: A History of Baseball's Labor Wars," talks about the Brooklyn Dodgers' last decade in New York, which ended in 1957. (Wollman Auditorium, Cooper Union, 51 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.) ♦ April 6 at 1: Morton Schindel, the founder of Weston Woods, a company known for its audio-visual adaptations of such classic children's books as "Where the Wild Things Are" and "Make Way for Ducklings," joins the animator Gene Dietch and other illustrators for a discussion about the work they do. (Donnell Library, 20 W. 53rd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ April 9 at 6:30: The artist Vik Muniz holds forth on his interest in photography. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. For more information, call 980-3942.) ♦ April 9 at 7: Following a reading by the actor Ruben Santiago-Hudson from "The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay," the author Michael Chabon discusses his novel with the filmmaker Wes Anderson. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)



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MOVIES OPENING

AMADEUS: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT
A rerelease of the 1984 picture, with extra scenes and enhanced sound. Opening April 5. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

BIG TROUBLE
Barry Sonnenfeld's comedy about a suitcase bomb and the problems it causes. The ensemble cast includes Omar Epps, Janeane Garofalo, Tim Allen, Patrick Warburton, and Jason Lee. Opening April 5.

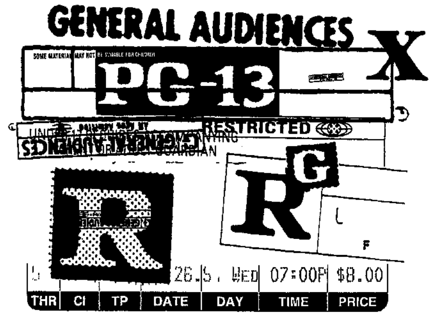
CRUSH
A romantic comedy with Andie MacDowell as the headmistress of an English prep school whose romance with a younger man ignites the jealousy of her friends. Opening April 3.

LES DESTINÉES
An upper-class Protestant minister (Charles Berling) leaves his wife (Isabelle Huppert) for a young woman (Emmanuelle Béart) in a drama set in Paris before the First World War. Written and directed by Olivier Assayas. In French. Opening April 5. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

HIGH CRIMES
Ashley Judd as an attorney who teams up with a maverick prosecutor (Morgan Freeman) to defend her husband (Jim Caviezel), a U.S. soldier accused of committing war crimes. Directed by Carl Franklin. Opening April 5.

THE KOMEDIANT
Arnon Goldfinger's documentary about the Burstein Family, a popular Yiddish vaudeville troupe. Opening April 5. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

NATIONAL LAMPOON'S VAN WILDER
A college comedy in which a campus journalist (Tara Reid) is torn between her pre-med boyfriend (Daniel Cosgrove) and a seventh-year senior (Ryan Reynolds). Opening April 5.



Opening April 5, "Les Destinées," directed by Olivier Assayas.

JEAN CLAUDE GOTTING

FILM NOTES

A BEAUTIFUL MIND
If you think the title stinks, try the movie. On March 24, it received Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Adapted Screenplay, thus proving that although the Academy may shy away from honoring comedies, some of its own decisions can still be guaranteed to give us all a good laugh. Russell Crowe plays John Nash, a real-life mathematician whose most radical work was produced in his early twenties and who shared the 1994 Nobel Prize for Economics at the age of sixty-six. In between lay years of darkness, during which Nash was assailed by paranoid schizophrenia. When it comes to the delicate matter of his delusions, this earnest movie, written by Akiva Goldsman and directed by Ron Howard, pulls a flagrant scam: whole characters and episodes are presented as urgently authentic, only to be revealed as figments of a cracked imagination. Crowe pulls out the stops, but he looks too bullish and controlled for such a pitiable victim. The movie grinds on forever until it bumps into redemption; the best reason to stay with it is Jennifer Connelly, who smolders and suffers to perfection as Nash's weary wife. Math skills not required.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/7/02.) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE BIG SLEEP
Humphrey Bogart is Raymond Chandler's private eye in this witty, incredibly complicated 1946 thriller. You may not be able to figure out the plot even after the dénouement (Chandler reported that while the film was in production William Faulkner and the other screenwriters had to appeal to him for guidance, and apparently Chandler couldn't exactly figure it out, either), but it's the dialogue and the entertaining qualities of the individual sequences that make this movie. The characters are a collection of sophisticated monsters—blackmailers, pornographers, apathetic society girls (Lauren Bacall and Martha Vickers are a baffling pair of spoiled sisters; the latter sucks her thumb), drug addicts, nymphomaniacs (a brunette Dorothy Malone seduces the hero in what must surely be record time), murderers. All of them talk in innuendoes, as if that were a new stylization of the American language. Howard Hawks directed—and so well that you may even enjoy the fact that, as he says, "neither the author, the writer, nor myself knew who had killed whom."—*Pauline Kael* (Moving Image; April 7.)

BLADE II
Guillermo del Toro, whose last project was the near-perfect ghost story "The Devil's Backbone," returns with this giddily absurd comic-book extravaganza, which is darker and displays more devilish wit than the original. The action scenes brim with bravura camera movements that seem influenced by the great Japanese *anime* directors; Wesley Snipes, as Blade, shows up for some razor-sharp swordplay and throws his spectacular body around like a pumped-on-steroids Baryshnikov. The story is pulpy nonsense about vampires fighting super-vampires, but the film's anything-goes pop carnage is a horror fan's delight.—*Bruce Diones* (Astor Plaza, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

CHAPLIN AT MUTUAL
The twenty-two-minute short films that Charlie Chaplin made for Mutual Studios are so sprightly they might win over even stone-faced followers of Buster Keaton. "The Immigrant" features the Tramp's most upbeat love story. "The Cure," with Chaplin playing a rich drunk in a health spa, contains one of his best-placed kicks in the pants of propriety, as teetotallers get woozy on spiked spring water. "The Adventurer" begins with Dada-esque zest as Chaplin, here an escaped con, emerges from a sandy hiding place smack into a policeman's gun. And "Easy Street" features his most inventive action-comedy climax: as a vagrant turned cop cleaning up a bad alley, he pricks himself with a drug addict's needle and is transformed into a speedy fighting machine.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; April 7.)

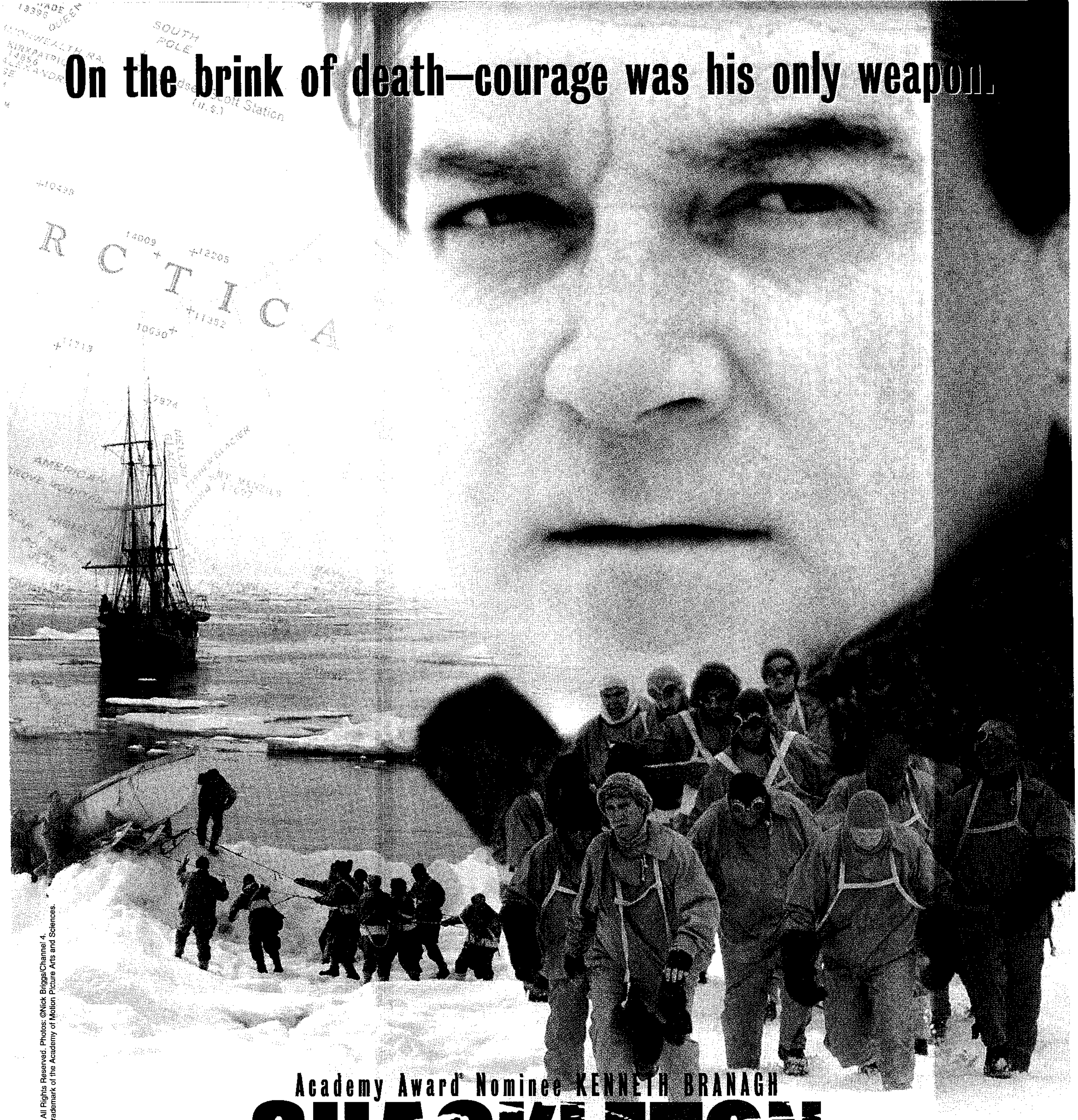
DEATH TO SMOOCHY
Not really a movie. More of a fifty-car highway pileup disguised as a movie. Robin Williams plays the host of a children's TV show—smiling onstage, all snarls elsewhere. He is fired for taking bribes, and, under the eye of a steely producer (Catherine Keener), his place is taken by a sweet, health-conscious fool (Ed Norton) in a rhino suit. Danny DeVito appears as a bouncy slimeball; he also directed the movie, which—and this is both a wild guess and a recommendation—may not appear on the stars' résumés in future years. It really is one to expunge: semi-plotted, silly yet funless, with overstuffed performances and a strange visual coating that manages to be at once plastic and sweaty. A shame, because there is a great comedy to be made about children's television and the empurpling stranglehold of Barney and his ilk. With Harvey Fierstein as a mobster; yes, it's that convincing.—*A.L.* (Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

GOSFORD PARK
This Agatha Christie-style houseparty murder mystery, set in 1932, plants itself deep into social reality and achieves the kind of candor about class and sex that Christie would never have been capable of. The brilliant screenplay was written by Julian Fellowes. Robert Altman directs an enormous cast with lightness and speed and a masterly ability to pull the many little pieces of intrigue together into a coherent whole. Casually, the movie chronicles the end of the rigid British class system and the liberation of the working class through popular entertainment. The once-in-a-lifetime cast includes Michael Gambon, Kristin Scott Thomas, Maggie Smith, Jeremy Northam, and Charles Dance as the swells, and Helen Mirren, Eileen Atkins, Alan Bates, Clive Owen, and Emily Watson as the servants.—*David Denby* (1/14/02) (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ICE AGE
A genial, computer-animated fable about a woolly mammoth, a sabre-toothed tiger, and a motor-mouthed sloth (voiced by John Leguizamo) who battle prehistoric blizzards and earthquakes to return a baby safely to her tribe. The film is stylishly designed by the director Chris Wedge, and the animators don't try to outdo the dazzling visual sophistication of "Shrek" or "A Bug's Life." It's exactly this low-key attention to entertaining storytelling—minus the kid-friendly tunes—that makes the movie a worthwhile change of pace.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

IRIS
Richard Eyre imparts an affectionate and reverential gloss to the mental decline of the writer Iris Mur-

On the brink of death—courage was his only weapon.



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doch. He tells the story in a series of linked vignettes, with scenes from the life of the young Iris juxtaposed with those from the old. It's a particular trick of film, to fuse together the ages of life this way—a technique with an edge of cruelty that also gives it sting. Judi Dench plays the elderly Iris, and her portrayal of Murdoch's sickness is physically precise, a careful study of carriage and expression. Jim Broadbent, as the old John Bayley, is initially all donnish bemusement, but his performance deepens as he becomes a caregiver overtaken by chagrin and grief. Kate Winslet and Hugh Bonneville play the couple in their youth, and in their too brief scenes they charmingly convey a love in the offing, a bumbler chasing a sprite.—*Michael Agger* (Cinema 2, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

MONSOON WEDDING

Mira Nair's new picture has been hailed as a feel-good spree, but it's better than that—a barely stable compound of the wounding, the confusing, and the appealing. The action takes place in Delhi, where a pair of middle-class parents (Lillete Dubey and Naseeruddin Shah) work themselves into a froth over the nuptials of their daughter (Vasundhara Das). Her marriage is, of course, arranged; for all the racket and buzz of the film's modernity, it finds time to make the suggestion—bewildering, perhaps, to audiences here—that from this archaic arrangement can spring an enduring love. The groom is flying in from Houston, Texas; another relative travels from Australia, and you brace yourself for the cultural collisions. The result is a comedy, but only just. India's stressful poise between orthodoxy and innovation (listen for the clash of peacock and cell phone) leads to a devastating family fracture that is only half-healed by the celebrations at the end. In English and Hindi.—*A.L.* (2/18 & 25/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Paris, Sunshine Cinema, and 34th Street Theatre.)

MONSTER'S BALL

Marc Forster's movie delivers an unworkable paradox: the characters are inarticulate, damaged people who have led heedless and tragic lives—portrayed with bitter realism—and yet the plotting is sheer Hollywood in its schemes and coincidences. Billy Bob Thornton is the Georgia corrections officer who conducts the execution of the husband (Sean "P. Diddy" Combs) of a local waitress (Halle Berry) and then falls in love with the widow. The slow, reticent dramaturgy has its moments of authenticity, especially in the balanced interracial romance: Thornton is quiet and affecting and Berry acts up a storm.—*D.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

PANIC ROOM

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE PIANO TEACHER

A seriously scandalous work, beautifully made, which deserves a sizable audience that might argue over it, appreciate it, and even hate it. Isabelle Huppert is Professor Erika Kohut, a bullying teacher at the Vienna Conservatory. Absolute control of art is her sole desire and her sole vanity, but messy life keeps breaking up the rigid mental rituals. Now and then, she sneaks off to a posh video-porn parlor or spies on couples making love. A possible paramour appears in the form of an insolently charming student (Benoît Magimel), who thinks he's going to melt the iron maiden with tenderness. The two have a long encounter in the conservatory's bathroom that may be the strangest love scene in the history of movies. The director, Michael Haneke, is a widely produced German playwright who turned to movies (his last film was the piercing "Code Unknown"). Here, his frame is clear, lucid, and calm, and he is working with an actress who can draw fury out of extreme elegance and self-containment. In French.—*D.D.* (4/1/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas and Cinema Village.)

RESIDENT EVIL

The genetically superior Milla Jovovich does her best Angelina Jolie impression in yet another feeble attempt at making an entertaining movie from a video game. The plot has her trapped inside an underground research lab fighting zombies and computer-generated Dobermans. Mayhem ensues as poor storytelling, incoherent editing, and bone-crushingly bad rock songs tear director Paul W. S. Anderson's movie to pieces.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SHOWTIME

Eddie Murphy, betraying his "Beverly Hills Cop" past, and Robert De Niro, continuing his comedic career swing, send up the buddy-cop movie. Although they click well in a few scenes, they're no Starsky and Hutch. After a botched drug bust, they get picked for a reality television show, and the script devotes a lot of time to the underwhelming observation that we act differently when we're on camera. Much of the humor is too self-referential—jokes with footnotes—and the whole production feels a bit half-hearted. The thugs are the movie's only real triumph: hirsute, club-hopping Eastern Europeans with guns that shoot bullets the size of soda cans.—*M.A.* (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

STOLEN SUMMER

A train wreck of a movie that's of interest only as a curiosity piece for fans of "Project Greenlight," the reality television series that captured the wobbly directorial début of Pete Jones, a Chicago insurance salesman and aspiring screenwriter. The minor-league backstabbing of the production team was captured on camera, but more revealing were the forthright discussions about plot, motivation, and scene. We all know smart people make bad movies, but now we know how: by consensus, on speakerphone, in meetings with plenty of bottled water. Jones's original script presumably had spark, but the version that made it to the screen reads as if it were cribbed from the Boy Scout handbook. Matters aren't helped by the two child actors who anchor the film and speak their lines as if speaking were something new to them. With Aidan Quinn, Kevin Pollak, and Bonnie Hunt earning some combat pay.—*M.A.* (Cinema 3, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

THE STRONG MAN

At the time this 1926 picture (his best) came out, Harry Langdon—innocent, moronic, infantile, saintly, cunning—was widely held to be in the class of Chaplin, Keaton, and Lloyd. It was his second long comedy and his last box-office success; perhaps not coincidentally, it was almost his last association with Frank Capra, who had been instrumental in shaping Langdon's comic character. Langdon plays a Belgian soldier in the First World War who has become a pen pal of an American girl and comes to find her after the war; he eventually has to clean out the corrupt town she lives in. At one point he falls into the grip of a tough broad who is trying to steal some money from the lining of his coat; he misinterprets her action and gives a glorious rendition of outraged virtue. Silent.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; April 3.)

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

For several years, Tony Curtis had been a virtual guarantor of box-office success, and the New York locations for this 1957 film were invaded by thousands of teen-agers, who broke through police barricades to get to their idol. But these throngs ignored the completed picture, in which Curtis grew up into an actor and gave what will probably be remembered as the best performance of his career. Even the presence of that other box-office guarantor, Burt Lancaster, did not lift the picture from the red ink. This is understandable, because the movie is a slice of perversity—a study of dollar and power worship, with Lancaster as a Broadway gossip columnist and Curtis as an ingratiating, blackmailing press agent. Clifford Odets never came through more pungently as a screenwriter; his distinctively idiomatic dialogue generally seems like bad poetry when it's spoken from the screen, but here it's harshly expressive and taut. The director, Alexander Mackendrick, has a crisp film-noir style: the production is shaped by a zest for the corrupt milieu, the pulsating big-city life (what used to be called "the symphony of a city")—the streets, the night clubs, the cynical types, the noise and desperation.—*P.K.* (Film Forum.)

THE TIME MACHINE

In the future, we'll all be listening to Enya. The dyspeptic novel by H. G. Wells about a Victorian inventor who dabbles in time travel gets a New Age makeover courtesy of his great-grandson, the director Simon Wells. As Alexander Hartdegen, Guy Pearce does an admirable job of keeping a straight face, and his rides in the time machine are astonishing special-effects displays. One set piece—a triple-time morphing of nineteenth-century Manhattan into our skyscraper era—could be shown at the Hayden Planetarium. Even the improbable leaps of logic and the bland, international English dialogue don't really dampen the fun. It's when Pearce arrives in the future and discovers the Eloi (sort of like the Anasazi, except they're really into bamboo) that the race and class issues get an awkward, cringe-inducing treatment. Still, it's worth sticking around just to see Jeremy Irons as the Uber-Morlock.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, 59th Street East Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

TIME OUT

The French director Laurent Cantet has taken no more than two films to establish his credentials. These rest not just upon the quietness of his style, which feels alternately menacing and polite, but upon his determined choice of subject: he makes movies about work. His last film, "Human Resources," turned a drab argument about the thirty-five-hour workweek, as imposed by French law, into a wrenching domestic drama. His new film doubles the pressure. Aurélien Recoing plays Vincent, a family man with a good, if demanding, job in Geneva. The hours required of him are long and late, but there's just one hitch: the job doesn't exist. In fact, our hero is unemployed, and he has fabricated a career so as not to disappoint his wife and parents—and, one might say, himself. This is all founded on a true story, which ended in murder and attempted suicide, but Cantet removed those horrors—imagine an American contemporary practicing such restraint—and left himself with a calm, compassionate study of despair and its awful antidotes. In French.—*A.L.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN

A new movie from the Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón, who came to Hollywood to make "A Little Princess" and "Great Expectations" and who has now returned in triumph to his homeland. The story is a stripped-down road movie: two teen-age friends, one rich (Diego Luna) and one poor (Gael García Bernal), borrow a car and set off to find the perfect beach, in the company of a Spanish woman (Maribel Verdú) who is not merely older, but married. Plus, she seems inexplicably happy to take either, or both, of them to bed. All the boys' dreams, in other words, have come true, and they can hardly handle it. What ensues is a sad and sexy picaresque, as everyone's illusions are peeled off along with their clothes. Cuarón's style is so open and relaxed, and his actors are so attuned to one another, that not until the final scene, with its litany of revelations, do we see that what felt life-affirming has also been a meditation on the slide of time, and on the offstage presence of death. Unrated, and therefore full of proper sex, with all the improprieties intact. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (3/18/02) (Lincoln Plaza, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

AMÉLIE (11/5/01)

Angelika Film Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Murray Hill Cinemas.

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (3/25/02)

Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

SUNKEN TREASURES *At Alice Tully Hall, the aquatic masterpieces of Jean Painlevé with a score written and performed by Yo La Tengo (see Night Life).*

SETH

LAST ORDERS (2/18 & 25/02)
First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.
MARGARITA HAPPY HOUR
The Screening Room.
NO SUCH THING
Angelika Film Center.
STORYTELLING (2/4/02)
Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through May 5: "Hardboiled Hollywood." April 6 at 2: "Double Indemnity" (1944, Billy Wilder). ♦ April 6 at 4:15: "Mildred Pierce" (1945, Michael Curtiz). ♦ April 7 at 2: "The Big Sleep" (†). ♦ April 7 at 4:15: "The Long Goodbye" (1973, Robert Altman). ♦ Repertory night. April 6-7 at 6:30: "Fitzcarraldo" (1982, Werner Herzog; in German).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Through April 11: "The Fools of April," comedic shorts and features. April 3 at 7 and April 6 at 2:30: "Calling All Crazies," animated shorts. ♦ April 3 at 8:30: "Who's the Caboose?" (1997, Sam Seder). ♦ April 4 at 7 and 9:30 and April 7 at 6: "Little Murders" (1971, Alan Arkin) and "The Absent-Minded Waiter" (1977, Carl Gottlieb). ♦ April 5 at 7:30 and April 7 at 3:30: "Foolin' Around with Found Footage." ♦ April 5 at 9 and April 6 at 10: "South Park: Bigger, Longer, Uncut" (1999, Trey Parker). ♦ April 6 at 4 and April 7 at 5: Early 8-mm. work of the Kuchar brothers. ♦ April 6 at 5:30 and April 7 at 4: "Myra Breckinridge" (1970, Michael Sarne). ♦ April 6 at 8 and April 7 at 8:30: "Richard Pryor: Live at Sunset Strip" (1982, Joe Layton). ♦ April 9 at 8:30: "Curse of the Seven Jackals" (2000, Chris Jolly).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through June 6: "The Great American Comedy." April 3 at 1:10, 4:05, 7, and 9:55: "Sherlock Jr." (1923, Buster Keaton). ♦ April 3 at 2:30, 5:25, and 8:20: "The Strong Man" (†). ♦ April 4-6 at 1:20, 5:30, and 9:40: "Trouble in Paradise" (1932, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ April 4-6 at 3:35 and 7:45: "To Be or Not to Be" (1942, Lubitsch). ♦ April 7 at 1: "Her Sister from Paris" (1925, Sidney Franklin). ♦ April 7 at 2:50 and 6:50: "Chapliniana," films of Chaplin impersonators. ♦ April 7 at 5:10 and 9:10: "Chaplin at Mutual" (†).

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (601-1000)—April 8-11: "New York–Berlin: Films by Michael Blackwood." April 8 at 7:30 and 9:30: "We Were German Jews" (1981). ♦ April 9 at 7:30 and 9:30: "Empire City" (1984) and "Broadway Express" (1959). ♦ April 10 at 7:30 and 9:30: "Berlin's Jewish Museum: A Personal Tour with Daniel Libeskind" (2000). ♦ April 11 at 7:30 and 9:30: "The Once and Future Pariser Platz: A Square in Berlin Comes Back" (1999) and "New Yorkers" (1971).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through April 7: "New Directors/New Films." April 3 at 6 and April 4 at 9: "The White Sound" (2001, Hans Weingartner; in German). ♦ April 3 at 9 and April 4 at 6: "Jeunesse Dorée" (2001, Zaïda Ghorab-Volta; in French). ♦ April 5 at 6 and April 7 at 8:30: "Paradox Lake" (2002, Przemyslaw Reut). ♦ April 5 at 9 and April 6 at 1: "El Bola" (2000, Achero Mañas; in Spanish). ♦ April 6 at 3:30 and April 7 at 6: "The Orphan of Anyang" (2001, Wang Chao; in Mandarin). ♦ April 6 at 6 and April 7 at noon: "Kira's Reason—A Love Story" (2001, Ole Christian Madsen; in Danish). ♦ April 6 at 9 and April 7 at 3: "Late Marriage" (2001, Dover Kosashvili; in Georgian and Hebrew). ♦ Through April 5: "Kon Ichikawa: A Reprise." All films are in Japanese. April 4 at 2:30: "The Wanderers" (1973). ♦ April 5 at 2: "The Makioka Sisters" (1983). ♦ Lech Majewski's "The Roe's Room" (1996), a video of the director's autobiographical opera. April 9 at 3:30 and 6.

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through April 4: A tribute to the director Budd Boetticher. April 4 at 1: "Comanche Station" (1960). ♦ April 4 at 3: "Buchanan Rides Alone" (1958). ♦ Starting April 5: The New York African Film Festival. April 5 at 1 and April 7 at 7:30: "The Price of Forgiveness" (2001, Mansour Sora Wade; in Wolof). ♦ April 5 at 3:15 and April 7 at 1: "Blue Sky" (2000, Patrick Meunier). ♦ April 5 at 5 and April 7 at 5:15: "L'Afrance" (2001, Alain Gomis; in Wolof and French). ♦ April 5 and April 8 at 7:15: "Karmen Gei" (2001, Joseph Gai Ramaka; in Wolof and French). ♦ April 5 at 9:45: "Hijack Stories" (2000, Oliver Schmitz). ♦ April 6 at 2: "Mama Africa," three films about women in modern Africa. ♦ April 6 at 4:30 and April 8 at 9:20: "Temporary Registration" (2001, Gahité Fofana; in French, Fulani, and Susu). ♦ April 6 at 7: "100 Days" (2000, Nick Hughes). ♦ April 6 at 9:15 and April 9 at 4:30: "God Is African" (2001, Akin Omotoso). ♦ April 7 at 2:45 and April 9 at 1: "Shouting Silent" (2002, Renée E. Rosen and Xoliswa Sithole; in English and Zulu). ♦ April 7 at 9:45: "Daresalam" (2000, Issa Serge Coelo; in Chadian and French). ♦ April 8 at 1: "Njangaan" (1974, Mahama Johnson Traoré; in Wolof and French). ♦ April 8 at 2:45 and April 9 at 9: "And So Angels Die" (2001, Moussa Sene Absa; in French and Wolof). ♦ April 8 at 5:15: "Dollar" (1999, Imunga Ivanga; in French).

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Vision of Katherine Ellis, U.S. Trust Portfolio Manager

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THE NEW YORKER

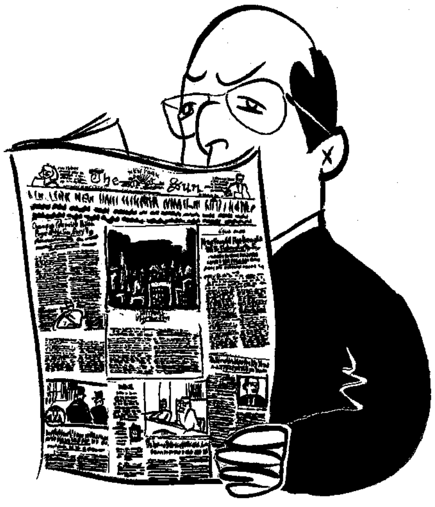
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
EXTRA!

If you are the sort of person who believes that a newspaper is ipso facto exciting in a way that a Web site or a mixed pair of lacquered television announcers behind a desk labelled “Eyewitness News” can never be, and if you think that a newsstand, no matter how many brands of breath mints it carries or cleavage magazines it displays, is unworthy of the name unless its focal point is a bench piled with half a dozen fresh stacks of locally printed broadsheets and tabloids, then you are also the sort of person who will welcome the rising, come Tuesday morning, April 16th, of the *Sun*. What the *Sun* will be rising from is the dead. A newspaper by that name was published in this city from September 3, 1833, until January 4, 1950, and the new *Sun*, though it has no more connection with the old one than Elvis Costello has with Elvis Presley, has no less, either. The new *Sun's* gothic nameplate is an exact replica of the old one's, with the same colophon—an engraving of a sunrise flanked by the goddesses of Justice and Liberty over the slogan “It Shines for All.” The new *Sun* will look remarkably like the old one during its twilight years, with a fussy, seven-column front page featuring smallish headlines stacked atop one another like pancakes, many of them in Cheltenham Bold Condensed, a typeface that was already musty in 1950. To all this one can only say: Swell!

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Seth Lipsky, the founder of the new *Sun*, is a cheerful, pear-shaped, Pickwickian man of fifty-five. Put him in a starched collar, high-button shoes, and a swallowtail coat and stick a pair of muttonchops on the sides of his bald head, and he would look just like one of the nineteenth-century legends of Newspaper Row—Horace Greeley, say, or (with the addition of a long white beard) Charles A. Dana himself, the editor of the previous *Sun* during its Gilded Age heyday. Here are four salient points about Seth Lipsky. First, he is a staunch conservative and a Jabotinskyite Zionist, which has helped make it possible for him to raise the millions needed to start even a miniature New York daily (the *Sun* will have fewer than twenty pages, and its initial press run will be sixty thousand, five per cent of the *Times'*) from the likes of Roger Hertog, a funder of right-wing think tanks, and Lord Black of Crossharbour, the formerly Canadian press magnate formerly known as Conrad Black, who owns the London *Daily Telegraph*. Second, he is an experienced newspaper entrepreneur; he helped launch the Asian and European editions of the *Wall Street Journal* and, in 1990, started the well-regarded English-language weekly edition of the *Forward*, once the passionately Socialist voice of New York's Yiddish-speaking masses. (Lipsky dreamed of taking the *Forward* daily, but by 2000 his politics had exhausted the patience of the *alter kockers* in the Forward Association, some of whom had personally known Eugene V. Debs, and he was let go.) Third, he is a bang-up newspaper editor, whose specialty is finding, training, and slave-driving young journalistic talent. Fourth, he is a hard-core newspaper sentimentalist.



Seth Lipsky

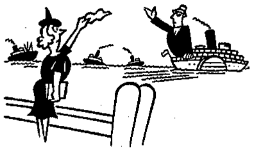
As such, Lipsky naturally tried to rent space in the old Sun Building, at Broadway and Chambers Street, across from City Hall. This great horizontal pile of marble was the center of fashionable Gotham life when it opened, in 1846, as A. T. Stewart's Dry Goods Store. The *Sun* took it over in 1917 and added a beautiful clock, which, miraculously, is still there, jutting out over the corner like a watchman's lantern. (The time is always 10:17.) Unfortunately, the space Lipsky wanted was unavailable and would have been too expensive anyway. But he did almost as well. The new *Sun* offices are just a block to the west, in the Cary Building, which went up in 1856 and is reckoned to be the oldest cast-iron building in the city. Its Chambers Street façade, freshly painted in a custardy white, is an Italianate symphony of arches, columns, cornices, and scrolls. Lipsky's *Sun* occupies the second of its five stories, where, the other day, in a narrow, bright, high-ceilinged, many-columned room nearly the whole block long, a dozen or so editorial and business types, most of them under thirty, sat behind Macs on brushed-steel tables, storing up articles and ads like squirrels preparing for winter. The main decorations, so far, are portraits by Lipsky, who is a not-bad Sunday painter. Lipsky's office has a Lipsky of Dana, looking like a constipated Walt Whitman. The office of Ira Stoll, Lipsky's twenty-nine-year-old managing editor, has a Lipsky of Frederick Douglass.

The *Sun* will be a niche paper. It will be a second (or third, or fourth) read for a few tens of thousands of New Yorkers. It will be the equivalent of a mimeographed shipboard newspaper for passengers who long ago booked staterooms on the S.S. New York Times. Its backers expect to lose money. For them, it's enough that expression will at last be given to political views that—apart from a few lonely voices at the New York *Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, two or three score nationally syndicated columns, a couple of dozen magazines, a few hundred 24/7 talk-radio stations, the Fox News cable network, the Bush Administration, the Supreme Court, and half of Congress—have been ruthlessly suppressed by the liberal establishment. The last proprietor of the old *Sun*, Thomas W. Dewart, boasted "without undue immodesty" that the paper had always stood for "constitutional government, sound money, reasonable protection for American industry, economy in public expenditures, preservation of the rights and responsibilities of the several states, free enterprise," and a few other things, while opposing "indecency and rascality," and "that form of governmental paternalism which eats into the marrow of private initiative and industry." Except perhaps for the protectionism, that's pretty much what the new *Sun* will stand for, too. But that's all right. "The solemn fact," E. B. White noted in this space after the old *Sun* set, "is not that we lose a conservative paper, or an ancient paper, or an honest paper, or a funny paper, but that we lose a paper—one voice in the choir." The rising of the new *Sun* is a happy fact. It is to be welcomed as a voice in the choir, whether or not that's what it'll be preaching to.

—Hendrik Hertzberg

SHIPPING DEPT.

PRONOUN OVERBOARD

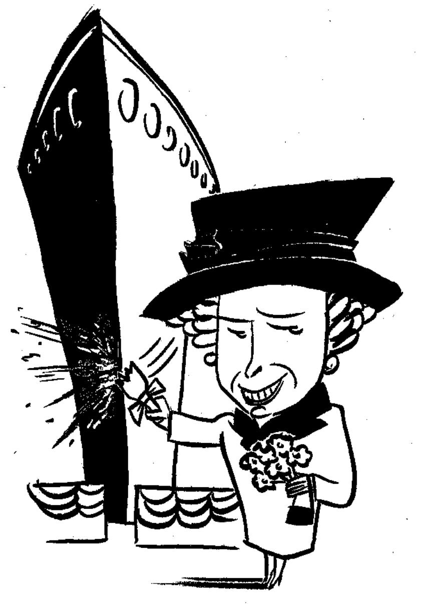


The gloved hand pauses before dispatching the champagne bottle toward the gleaming hull, and a royal voice pronounces the baptismal words: "May God bless her and all who sail in her." Ships have been female in English since at least 1375, according to the Oxford English Dictionary; but one traditional endorser of their sex has decided to neuter the fleet. *Lloyd's List*, since 1734 the daily gazette of world shipping news, is going over from "she" to "it." It tried the change four years ago but surrendered in the face of verbal boarding parties from nautical traditionalists. The editor, Julian Bray, says, hard-heartedly, of ships, "Ultimately, they are commodities, they are commercial assets. They are not things that have character—either male or female."

Macho mariners responded with the insistence that ships always had been and ever would be female (bloody-minded, expensive, continually needing a lick of paint), while feminist academics applauded this modernization of the language as overdue. Ships were one of a long line of things—fowling pieces, cannon, cars, trains—that boys patronizingly compared to girls. Undeterred, the Royal Navy announced that it would continue to refer to its vessels in the feminine.

Yet man talk about ships is not the same as boy talk about cars; and the editor of *Lloyd's List* is wrong to imagine that ships were female in the first place because of their attributed "character." It is a question not of character but of spirit; a vessel suggests an entity greater than the sum of its parts. Marina Warner, the scholar of female representation, told me, "It's one of those metaphors we live by. It's linked to the idea of the ship as an image for the state—a container, a womb. And it connects with the idea of the Church, *ecclesia*, enfolding bishops and clergy and kings the way a ship enfolds passengers and crew." After reading the *Lloyd's List* news, Warner heard a naval officer comment on the decommissioning of a Falklands War aircraft carrier and refer to the vessel as "her." "I must say, it did feel very quaint," she said. Was she in any way offended? "Not at all."

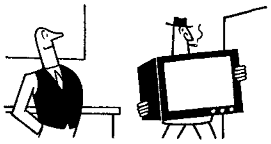
The allegorical element is effectively defunct, but this doesn't mean that the matter should be left to sea dogs and the gender police. One solution would be to widen the choice of pronouns. A vessel could be he, she, or it, according to function or perception. Warships would inevitably be male; so, too, would powerboats whose prows rise phallically out of the water. Yachts, the Mary Celeste, and any remaining ships of state—like the Bucentaur, in Venice—would remain female. Container ships, car ferries, and other of Bray's "commodities" deserve no better than neuterdom. And vessels of noxious cargo, like nuclear waste, or of dubious skipperdom, like rusting freighters full of duped refugees, might earn an opprobrious capitalization: It.



There is, however, another problem on the horizon: "May God bless her . . ." In our multi-faith and agnostic world, it can't be long before God comes under pressure to give up blessing ships. The royal presence will also have to go, and perhaps that bottle of élitist, toxic champagne. Imagine the future ceremony: a gray suit, a bottle of Perrier, and the launching words "The very, very best of luck to this ship, and to absolutely everybody who sails in it." No one will be offended, and very few will be excited.

—*Julian Barnes*

GIZMO DEPT.
CUTTING OFF OSCAR



The test of any technology is the extreme case. For a car, it is surviving the Paris-Dakar Rally. For a hair dryer, it is baking Don King's hair into a ziggurat. And for TiVo, the digital video-recording device, it is capturing the wily and elusive Academy Awards broadcast.

In the past year, TiVo has been widely adopted in Hollywood, where it is beloved for its ability to store up to sixty hours of programming; to create a profile of its subscribers based on what they watch and then record shows it believes they will like; and to blitz through commercials at sixty times normal speed. In mid-March, TiVo sent its customers an e-mail urging them to build their Oscar nights around TiVo, but reminding them to "pad" their recordings by at least thirty minutes: "That way, in case the ceremony runs long (ahem!), you're covered."

David Park, an agent at United Talent Agency, went one step further. He said, "I set TiVo to record the Oscars"—slated to run from 5:30 to 8:30 P.M., Pacific Time—"*and* the hour-long Barbara Walters special that followed it. I knew I had four hours—plenty of time. My girlfriend and I came home after a lovely dinner and chilled on the couch, eating tiramisu and fast-forwarding through the boring parts, the technical awards. We saw Halle Berry freaking out, saw Julia Roberts freaking out, and then, right before she announced Best Actor—it cut off! I said, 'This totally sucks!' " The Awards had run four hours and twenty-three minutes, a record.

"My wife and I always watch the Oscars with another couple," John Collier, a writer for "King of the Hill," said. "This year, with TiVo, we smugly announced, 'We'll do things right.' So we sat our friends down to a butterflied leg of lamb and a nice bottle of Amarone, and then, at our leisure, we took our apple-strawberry crumble into the den and showed off TiVo's capabilities. We replayed the hilarious Reese Witherspoon moment, when her husband let her open the envelope, saying, 'You make more than I do, so go ahead,' and we checked out Gwyneth Paltrow's dress more than once. One of our friends said, 'I feel funny about this—it doesn't feel like I've earned the evening.' And I said 'No, no, this is the future of television!' Just before Best Actress, TiVo went off. As we sat in stunned silence, the phone rang. It was my friend Richard Appel, wanting to know who had won Best Picture."

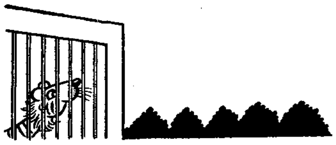
Appel, who has just created a pilot for NBC, said, "My niece, who lives in London, was visiting us, and she had never heard of TiVo. All through dinner, I was extolling its virtues. She was nervous about missing the show, but I said, 'Have seconds! Have dessert! You are the master of your evening!' When we went upstairs to watch, we discovered that the recording had stopped just as Denzel Washington won. I thought that TiVo always taped an extra thirty minutes, but it turned out that TiVo had gone on to record the Cartoon Network, a favorite of my eight-year-old son's. Apparently, my TiVo thinks I am someone who watches 'Meet the Press,' 'Oz,' and 'Sheep in the Big City.' That night, I had 'Sheep in the Big City.' "

The man in charge of TiVo's onscreen functioning is Howard Look. On Oscar night, Look and his wife put their children to bed in their Palo Alto home and settled in to watch the awards, TiVo style. "We zipped the commercials, but it still went on and on," Look said. "By the time Halle Berry was bawling her eyes out, I thought, This is trouble!" By fiddling with the controls, Look managed to catch all of the show, but he remains shaken by the experience. "The system may eventually be able to profile for a program's voices, to check if an event show is still on past its time," he said. "But next year we'll just warn customers even more sternly: 'Add two hours! Two and a half hours!' "

One lesson of TiVo's Academy Awards debacle is that the more ingenious the technology, the more humbled man will be by his inability to program it. Another is that Julia Roberts will perennially confound all reasonable hopes of brevity. A third, John Collier concludes, is that the situation had all the ingredients of classic tragedy. "I realize now that my downfall was my overweening pride," he said. "I believed I could make the Oscars happen on my schedule."

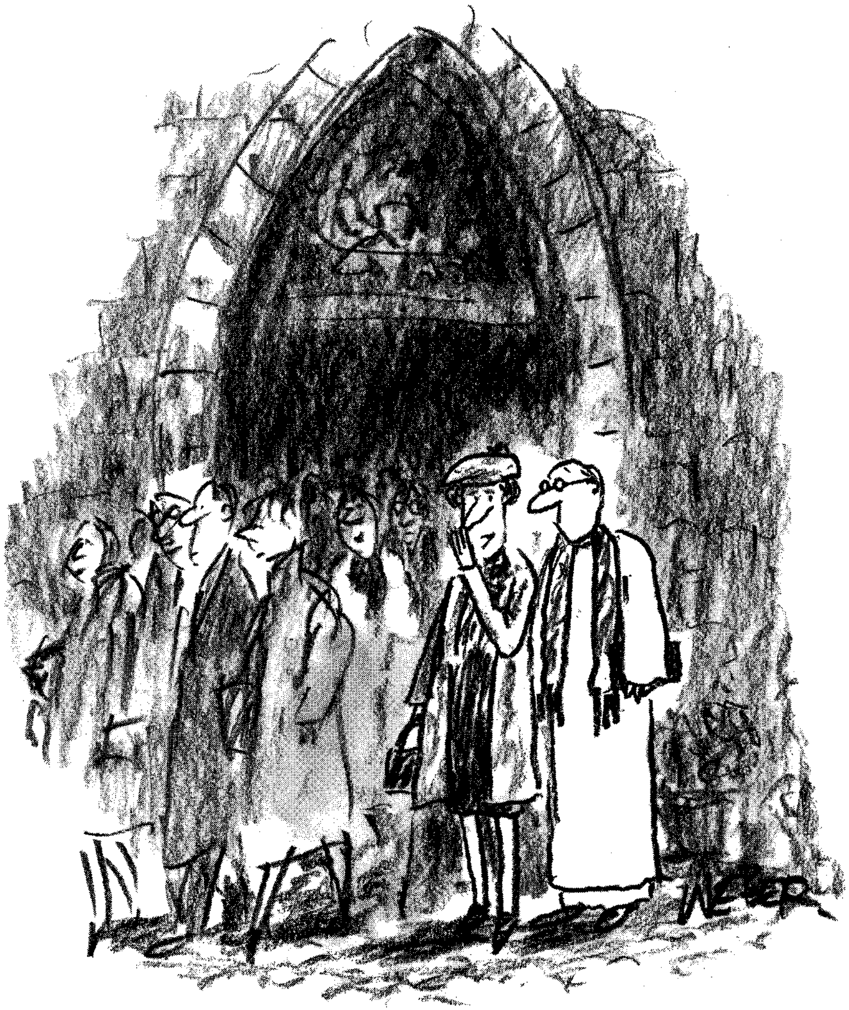
—*Tad Friend*

IN CAPTIVITY
TIGERS IN TIMES SQUARE



"Is that legal?" Dennis, from Brooklyn, asked. He was standing on a traffic triangle in the middle of Times Square, next to a policeman. It was just past noon. In front of them, two nearly naked women were kneeling in a pair of small metal cages, holding signs that read, "Wild Animals Don't Belong Behind Bars." As it happens, cops in Shreveport, Louisiana, encountered a similar scenario last spring and concluded that no, it was not legal to impersonate an animal while nearly naked. But in Times Square, even post-Giuliani, traffic flow trumps decency, and the officer's answer to Dennis was a blithe command: "Keep it moving, please!"

The women—Kayla Worden, tall and blond, and Brandi Valladolid, a petite brunette—were made up to look like tigers, or the nearly naked human version of tigers, which requires body paint, a bikini bottom, Mickey Mouse ears, a brown nose, and drawn-on whiskers, but no fur. Fur might have helped, given that the temperature was below forty and rain was pouring down. But fur was out of the question, since this stunt was staged by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, to protest the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, which had come to town that day. ("We'd rather bare skin than wear skin" is a PETA slogan.) Betsy Thomson, a PETA volunteer, held an umbrella over Valladolid's cage and said, "All living things have a right to live without being harmed, tortured, and violated." Beneath her, Valladolid was squirming and shivering. "I'm, like, soaking right now," she said. Dennis, meanwhile, was on his cell phone: "Yo, they got some crazy shit back here. Two naked ladies in cages, man."



"I'm sure you're one of the good ones."

• •

A tourist from Philadelphia, in town to see "Phantom of the Opera," stepped up to take a photograph. "You know, looking through this wire, this is how circus animals see the world," Worden said.

Down at Madison Square Garden, the real Ringling Brothers tigers were warm and dry, asleep in their cages. "Some of them won't get up until one or two in the afternoon," Sara Houcke, a trainer and seventh-generation circus performer, said. "And I'll be, like, 'My God, how can you sleep so long?' It's a known fact that cats sleep twenty hours a day." Houcke is tall and blond, like Worden, but when she's in a cage, tending to her tigers, she wears jeans and a T-shirt (which may or may not reveal her navel ring). She feeds them by hand: raw beef, whole chickens, and horse meat.

Houcke's circus routine doesn't involve nudity, but is not without its own primitive appeal. "All my tricks are based on natural behaviors and instincts from the wild," she said. Houcke performs, alongside nine Bengal cats, as Sara the Tiger Whisperer. She is fluent not only in English, French, and German but also in "wuffling," her own form of tigerspeak. The relationship she has with her cats "is the most amazing thing I've ever, ever experienced," she said. "It's not that I go up there and I force them and say, 'You need to lick my face or you need to kiss my face.' But if a tiger wants to put its head on my shoulder and, you know, cuddle up to me . . ." Houcke will even stick her head inside a tiger's mouth, if that's what it wants. "I have more patience with my animals than I do with humans," she said. "My patience level for humans isn't very high."

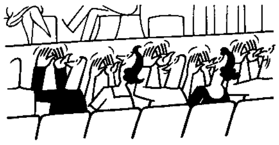
Up in Times Square, the PETA tigers were released from their cages, after forty-five minutes of cold rain. (The plan had called for an hour, but, as Worden explained, "I was freezing my ass off.") Volunteers wrapped the women in bathrobes and lugged away their cages. "This was nothing compared to a lifetime of captivity," Valladolid said.

A passing car sent a splash of water toward Worden's bare feet. "I'm willing to do anything for animals," she said.

—*Ben McGrath*

THE BOARDS

A NEW LAUREY



Josefina Gabrielle, the English actress who has taken on the role of Laurey in the new Broadway production of "Oklahoma!," could well be Laurey No. 30,000. The show is probably the most frequently produced musical ever, and has been performed in countries all over the world, including Iceland, Hungary, and Israel, since the original opened here fifty-nine years ago, in 1943.

"I love being Laurey—she's a classic, like Shakespeare," Miss Gabrielle said, in her trained, clipped accent, sitting in her dressing room at the Gershwin the other night. "Trevor Nunn, our director, takes things so deep. I was encouraged to make Laurey a young girl with adolescent emotions that she doesn't fully understand—a kind of tomboy becoming a woman. And to make her a stimulating match for Curly, like a Beatrice-and-Benedick relationship."

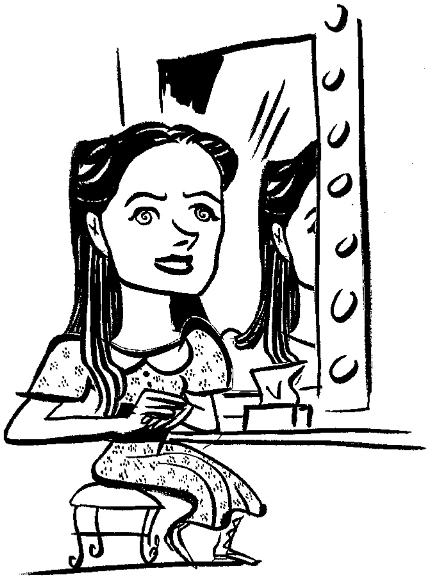
She had just finished the second of her Saturday performances, and she was unfazed and unspent. She had quickly dispensed with her Oklahoma accent and her curtain-call costume—a pink suit with a bustle and pale-lilac-colored lace-ups—and changed into Gap jeans and a black silk top with bell sleeves. She was hungry after the six-hour stretch onstage, so she headed to a nearby restaurant for a plate of pasta. (She is the only professional Laurey on record who not only sings and acts but also dances her own dream-ballet sequence.)

Miss Gabrielle's home is in Northwest London, where she was born and reared by her mother, a high-school teacher. When she was seventeen, after fourteen years of ballet lessons, she was hired by the National Ballet of Portugal.

"It was a wonderful life," she said. "But after five years I started asking myself, 'Why am I here?' and 'Is this my life?' So I quit and went home. No matter how beautiful a dancer you are, you never open your mouth or have a chance to be a fully rounded character in ballet. I was never really an Aurora or an Odette. What interests me is heightened emotion!"

Back in London, things moved quickly. She got a job in the chorus of a production of "Carousel," directed by Nicholas Hytner. She took singing lessons, got an acting coach, and steeped herself in theatre. Then came a chance to dance Laurey's dream sequence in an English road tour of "Oklahoma!" She also did a little Shakespeare—Helena in "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

"In a Shakespeare play, you never stop finding things to do in the character you play," she said. "It's the same in 'Oklahoma!' I'm finding new things to do in Laurey every day. I could sit down and write a whole book about her. It's a moment of sheer delight, before my dream dance, when I'm presented with a dress—a real dress—in a box, for the first time. It's a 'Yeow!' moment.

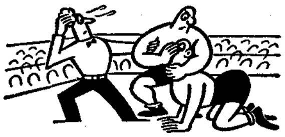


Josefina Gabrielle

"This is the first time I've been in a show in America," she went on. "My boyfriend, who is an actor, too, came from London for the opening. It was a big night. For the party, I went out and bought a new frock. A long, strapless, sexy black silk frock by Angel Sanchez, with sheer horizontal panels. Yeow!"

—*Lillian Ross*

ON THE MAT
HOMEGROWN SMACKDOWN



On a Sunday afternoon not long ago, the Underground Wrestling Association, or UWA, staged a farewell extravaganza at the Doghouse, a wrestling gym in the Cypress Hills section of Brooklyn. UWA (it's pronounced *ooh-wah*) was merging with a rival league and, for all intents and purposes, passing out of existence.

Brian Ittem, UWA's twenty-one-year-old founder and elder statesman, started UWA eight years ago in the back yard of his family's house, in Glendale. Before that, he and his friends had used his bedroom to throw each other around, but his mother kicked them out, so Ittem and his father built a ring in the yard. Here the young athletes practiced maneuvers cribbed from television and video games, created new characters, wrote dialogue, decided who was a Face (a good guy) and who was a Heel (a bad guy), chose personal theme songs (Ittem's is "Devil's Dance," by Metallica), and put on shows for girlfriends and neighbors, complete with mock press conferences. Their ranks began to swell with defectors from other back-yard leagues, among them Glendale Championship Wrestling and Completely Crazy Wrestling. Two years ago, Ittem's mother decided enough was enough, and UWA moved to the Doghouse.

Ittem is small and wiry, with a milky complexion, sharp features, and curly blond hair. He works nights delivering pizza. His ring name is Zena, though he often refers to himself as the Man. Over the years, he has had many things broken over his head, including a bottle, a watermelon, and a chair. "It makes me nervous," his mother, Gail, confessed, but she had turned up for the farewell show nevertheless. "Not me," her daughter, Denise, said. "Except the ladder. I don't like the ladder."

Denise was referring to a prop in that afternoon's upcoming best-of-three grudge match between Zena and his former tag-team partner, Bubblez, a spindly fifteen-year-old named Scott Hampel, who wears thick, wire-rimmed glasses. The back story: Bubblez started out in the league as a referee, got attacked in the ring one day, then teamed up with Zena, before turning against him and declaring himself the New Man. At stake: the United States Civil Title belt, which for this match was suspended by a rope twenty feet above the ring. The rules: in rounds one and two, get the belt before your opponent does (this is where the ladder comes in); in round three, be the last man standing.

Shortly before three o'clock, the wrestlers got a last-minute pep talk from the gym's trainer, Laithon (Tower of Terror) Wilkerson. "This is y'all's last show," he told them, "so make it motherfucking good."

After an undercard that included one particularly treacherous bout featuring the Canadian Mauler (for some reason, many of UWA's villains are billed as Canadian), a ring announcer introduced Zena and Bubblez. It was time for the ladder. Zena won the first round, which ended with him hanging from the belt, legs wrapped around the torso of his flailing opponent. Bubblez took the second round, making good use of the Bubblez Bath, a move that required running up the ladder and flipping over backward. In the third round, Zena got trapped in the corner and was battered with the ladder, but he fought back and threw Bubblez over his shoulder, employing his own trademark move, the Total Impact. The force of the throw was apparently so great that neither fighter could get to his feet before a count of ten, and the referee declared the match a draw.

Upon returning to consciousness, Zena held up Bubblez's hand in victory, and said, "You used to be my tag-team partner, then you turned on me. You're not the New Man, and after this match I'm not the Man. Together, we're the Men—and that's all I have to say about that."

"Oh, the sportsmanship!" the announcer said.

Afterward, all of UWA's wrestlers climbed into the ring to take a final bow. They pumped their fists in the air, hugged each other, and crowded around Ittem, whose eyes, like almost everyone else's, were red and puffy from crying. A group of wrestlers grabbed Ittem and tossed him in the air as the crowd, clapping in rhythm, chanted, "Ooh-wah! Ooh-wah! Ooh-wah!"

—*Adam Green*

ANNALS OF ENTERTAINMENT

THE MOVIEGOER

Peter Bogdanovich returns to filmmaking.

BY TAD FRIEND

On a Wednesday evening in late February, Room 1057 at the New York University film school was crammed with young directors who were awaiting the start of a workshop with the director Peter Bogdanovich. Bodies in black turtlenecks packed the aisles; among film students, the legend of Bogdanovich has a dark glamour. He is their Icarus.

Like the students, Bogdanovich began his career by immersing himself in the history of film. After cultivating John Ford, Howard Hawks, and Orson Welles, he learned their craft so well that, starting with his classic meditation on small-town America, "The Last Picture Show," in 1971, he had three hits in eighteen months and became the most sought-after director in Hollywood. But his decline was as decisive as his rise.

"There is this aspect of 'Peter Bogdanovich died for our sins,' " says Quentin Tarantino, who let Bogdanovich stay at his guesthouse for a spell in 1999, just as Bogdanovich had put up Orson Welles in his Bel Air mansion for nearly two years in the seventies. "Peter was *so* famous that his fall was equally notorious. Even as a little kid, I knew that he'd had three flops in a row."

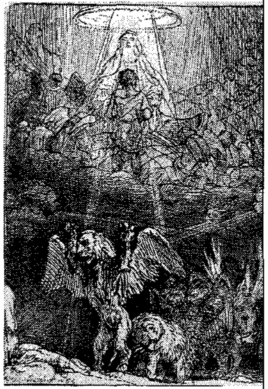
When at last Bogdanovich entered, the room fell silent. He looked around doubtfully, then placed a water bottle in a black mesh pouch on the table in front of him, like an assertion of principles. Professor Boris Frumin, a Russian filmmaker, began to ask questions in a melancholy tone: "You are started how?" "What for you makes difference, good script, no good?"

"I'd rather tell stories," Bogdanovich replied, sliding into an anecdote about John Ford's distaste for Bogdanovich's own exhaustive film-buff questions forty years ago. He mimicked Ford's bullyragging tones perfectly—"*Jaysus* Christ, Peter! I mean, *Jaysus!*"—then said "Hilarious story," as a prelude to a nifty impression of Howard Hawks's strangled drawl. But the laughter was faint: both Ford and Hawks died before many of the students were born.

Bogdanovich is sixty-two. He salts his conversation with such remarks as "Hitch once told me" and "As Sal Mineo said—dear Sal . . .," and his appearance, too, has a whiff of the grainy newsreel, the top hat in mothballs. His face is long and smooth, with a pendulous lower lip and unblinking brown eyes that are magnified by oversized horn-rims. A blue neckerchief hides his softening throat. That evening, he wore a blue Brooks Brothers shirt with the cuffs unbuttoned (Audrey Hepburn told him that loose cuffs were more comfortable), and Mephisto sneakers that cost two hundred and fifty dollars (Sidney Poitier recommended the style).

As he took the measure of his audience, Bogdanovich spoke increasingly in his own voice—which in recent years has begun to sound like Burt Lancaster's—and began delivering what the students had come for: tips and insights. When you film in black-and-white, he said, use a red filter to sharpen the contrast; placing the camera above eye level makes actors look better; if you cut on a character's movement, the audience notices the cut less. The students' pens scratched like a chorus of crickets.

Bogdanovich was always a meticulous craftsman, superb at getting performances out of actors and at making viewers feel at ease. While Robert Altman, Martin Scorsese, and Francis Ford Coppola were producing personal, experimental films about the splintered culture of the seventies, films that hinged on freakouts and assassinations, Bogdanovich was making black-and-white elegies, such as "The Last Picture Show" and "Paper Moon," that were set well before the Vietnam War, and were directed as if it had never happened. His films transported audiences to a time before drugs, race riots, and polyester pants—a



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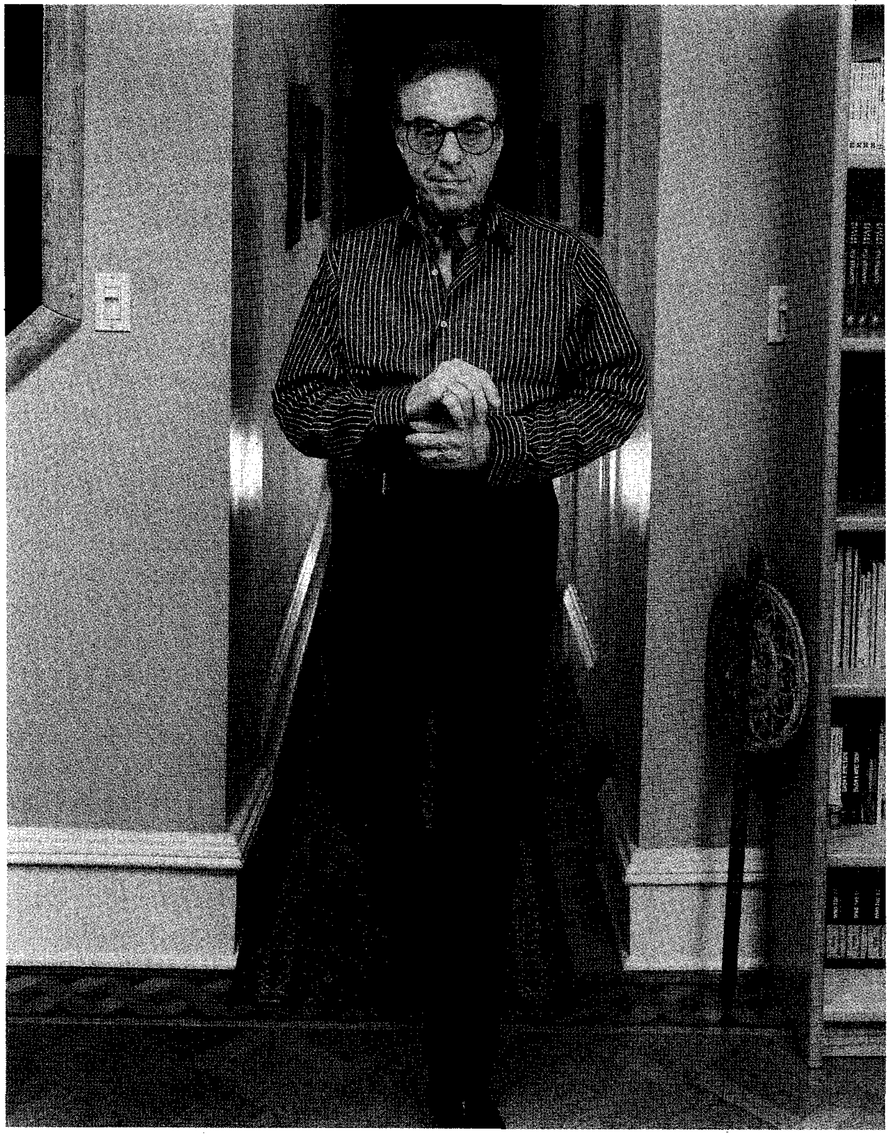
time when you drove your jalopy with high hopes to the spring dance.

A young woman stood up to ask, "What impact did the success of 'The Last Picture Show' have on you?"

Bogdanovich tugged his ear and sighed. "I'm still getting over it," he said. "Success is much tougher than failure." There were disbelieving snorts from the students. "You can kind of cozy up to failure, you can say, 'No one understands me.' But you can't say that if you're a hit. Success in Hollywood inspires a terrifying mixture of sucking up and hating. The bitch goddess, they used to call it—it throws people, and I'm certainly one of them."

As Bogdanovich's friend Robert Evans, the longtime Paramount producer, told me, "Success went straight to Peter's head. But it left his head and went to his feet pretty quick—they were in cement." In a throaty whisper, Evans added, "It's a dry-ice town, baby. Colder than cold."

In recent years, Bogdanovich has emerged as America's favorite film historian: he is the author of eleven books on film, including a series of intimate interviews with Orson Welles, "This Is Orson Welles," and a masterly 1997 best-seller about the art of directing, "Who the Devil Made It." His sprightly, intelligent commentary appears, seemingly, in every film documentary ever made. But for nearly a decade Bogdanovich has languished in what people in Hollywood call "movie jail," hired only to direct TV movies, such as "Naked City: A Killer Christmas." He declared bankruptcy for the second time a few years ago, and now lives in a rented two-bedroom apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side.



Bogdanovich in his Upper West Side apartment. Photograph by Chris Floyd.

Wes Anderson, the director of "The Royal Tenenbaums," recently asked Bogdanovich, whose work he admires, to sign an old photograph. "The photo shows Peter outside his mansion, wearing an unbelievably supercilious expression," Anderson says. "Next to it he wrote, 'Me, at the peak of arrogance. Would that I could only get it back.' "

But, as Bogdanovich diffidently told the students, he finally has a movie coming out—his first in nine years. The film, called "The Cat's Meow," explores the historical mystery of the fatal shooting of the producer Thomas Ince aboard William Randolph Hearst's yacht during a weekend cruise in 1924; the guests included Hearst's mistress, the actress Marion Davies, and her lover, Charlie Chaplin. The movie, which opens on April 12th, is an assured and unsparing look at Hollywood in the silent-film era. It was shot fast (in thirty-one days, in Berlin and Greece) and cheap (for six million dollars, with Bogdanovich earning a fee of two hundred and fifty thousand—one-fifth his price in his heyday). It was made, in short, the way a star film student might make his first big film.

At the onset of shooting, Bogdanovich tried out his old manner on his eighteen-year-old lead, Kirsten Dunst, who plays Marion Davies. "You know," he told her reassuringly, "when I worked with Tatum"—O'Neal, then aged eight, on her Oscar-winning performance in "Paper Moon"—"I gave her line readings for every line." Dunst, who had never seen "Paper Moon," was unmoved.

"At the beginning, Peter was, like, this history professor who treated me like a little girl," Dunst told me. But she and the other actors came to admire Bogdanovich's skills. She said, "It was like the camera was dancing."

A student asked about the famous final scene of "The Last Picture Show," in which Cloris Leachman throws a cup of coffee at the wall, venting her rage at the teen-ager who jilted her, played by Timothy Bottoms. Bogdanovich held the camera on Leachman's stricken face for an extraordinarily long time, pulled back to show them both, and then dissolved, very slowly, to the empty Texas town.

Bogdanovich replied, "It was a silent scene, so I talked to Cloris throughout to get the performance. I said, 'You have a word on your mind, you're losing the word, oh, what's the word, you almost have it!' It was like D. W. Griffith, who used to mesmerize Lillian Gish with his voice."

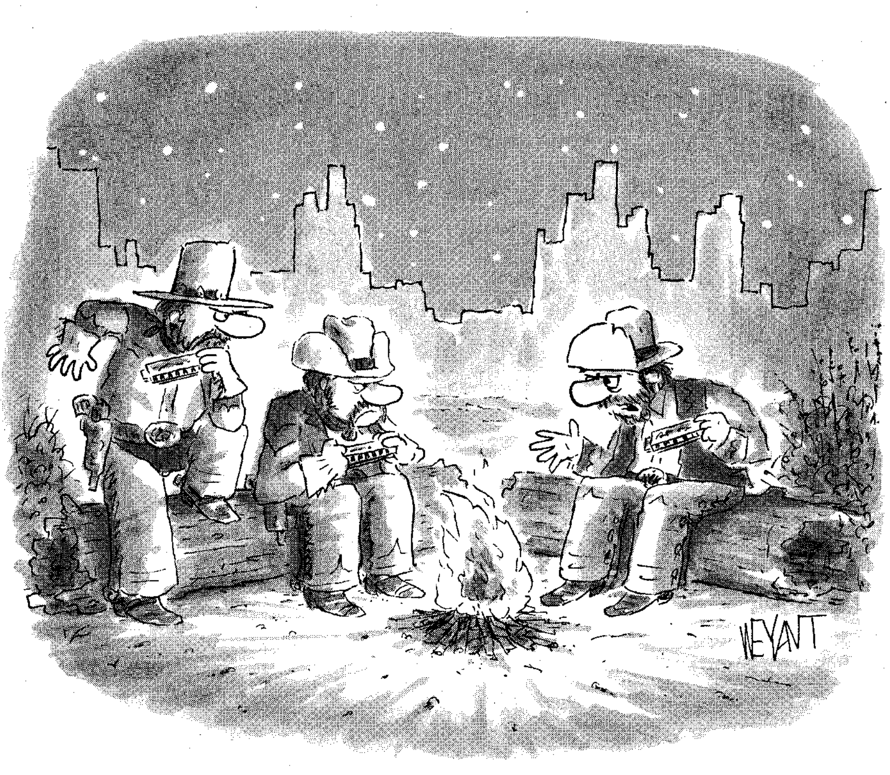
Lost in a reverie, Bogdanovich continued, "I physically cut together 'Picture Show' myself on a Moviola at the BBS Studios office on La Brea, with Cybill Shepherd sleeping on a couch over here"—he gestured behind him—"working until 6 A.M. every morning. It was great!" The students began to grin, and a few even applauded. This, everyone seemed to feel, was what real directors did, once.

When Bogdanovich said goodbye, the room erupted. He blew a kiss with both hands. Afterward, in the elevator, he was silently radiant. "Students break my heart," he finally said. "They're so unspoiled."

Bogdanovich was introduced to the movies by his father, Borislav, who took him to afternoon screenings of silent films at the Museum of Modern Art. Borislav was a Serbian painter of the Post-Impressionist school; he and his wife, Herma, came to New York from Yugoslavia in 1939. They lived a life of bohemian striving on the Upper West Side: Peter went to an exclusive school, Collegiate, but his parents sometimes neglected to pay his tuition.

Borislav worked in his pajamas, rarely spoke, and would not let anyone touch his hair. He had a nervous breakdown when Peter was nine. Silent movies, watched in silence, became father and son's chief bond. Between the ages of twelve and thirty, Peter watched 4,984 films; he wrote out his response to each one on a file card, and he keeps the cards, typed and cross-indexed, in metal file drawers near his bed. Bogdanovich was convinced that the golden era of film had ended in 1962, with John Ford's "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance," and in his 1973 book, "Pieces of Time," he wrote that such modern obsessions as quick cutting, split screens, and even sound and color "are, at best, adornments, at worst, self-indulgent decadence."

In 1961, after working as an actor, a theatre director, and an assistant to a revival-house curator, Bogdanovich visited Hollywood for the first time, working on an article that ran in *Esquire*. There he sought out father figures such as Howard Hawks and Jerry Lewis. "The wonderful thing about Peter is he's still like a groupie," says Lewis, who gave Bogdanovich his old suits to wear when he arrived in town, and one of his fleet of Mustangs to drive. "I always record my calls, and, listening to Peter's calls afterward, he's laughing all the time—it's a laugh track!"



"Hell, I'm just saying it would be nice if someone would play percussion for once."

Before Borislav Bogdanovich's death, in 1970, he saw his son's first movie, "Targets," which was about a deranged sniper. "I screened it for my parents," Bogdanovich told me over dinner at his neighborhood vegetarian restaurant, Zen Palate, where we ate several meals together. "Afterward, my father looked as grave as I'd ever seen him, and nodded once. That was the greatest compliment I ever got from him." He stared at his soup.

His next movie was "The Last Picture Show," which *Newsweek* called "the most impressive work by a young American director since 'Citizen Kane.' " When the film opened in New York, Bogdanovich and the picture's twenty-year-old star, Cybill Shepherd—for whom he had left his wife during filming—sat with a bucket of iced champagne in a limousine outside the *Times* Building, awaiting the rave they knew must come.

Next, he tried his hand at a thirties-style screwball comedy, "What's Up, Doc?" "Peter was a lot of fun, even though he was a bit tyrannical," the film's star, Barbra Streisand, says, sounding amused. "He had a very clear vision. I would say, 'What do you think of this: I trip down the hall and'—and he'd interrupt: 'No.' " "What's Up, Doc?" and then "Paper Moon" were hits, and Bogdanovich moved with Shepherd into an old Spanish-style mansion that had belonged to Clark Gable's widow, and bought a Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud. Then he traded up to another, slightly longer Rolls.

"We were really obnoxious, Peter and I," Shepherd told me with a nostalgic smile. "I would go be an airhead on talk shows, and Peter became pompous and a screamer." Bogdanovich took to directing some of his outdoor scenes on horseback, galloping up in a cloud of dust. He even hosted the "Tonight Show" a couple of times. On one show, in 1974, his guest was Burt Reynolds, who declared, "When you're as successful as you are . . . a guy has to learn to hate you." Bogdanovich looked extremely pleased.

To this day, Bogdanovich is touchingly anxious to be appreciated. Apropos of nothing, he informed me that he had received an honorary doctorate from Emerson College. "They asked me to do the commencement speech," he said. "I have a tape of it. The laughter was *amazing*, though you can't really hear it that well on the tape. And they gave me a standing ovation, which you don't see, unfortunately."

By the mid-seventies, he had begun to misfire. "Daisy Miller" (1974), which starred Shepherd, got mixed reviews, and was followed by the flops "At Long Last Love," a musical he wrote, which also starred Shepherd, and "Nickelodeon," which the studio, Columbia Pictures, refused to allow Shepherd to be in. Even though Bogdanovich had final cut, the studios' growing concerns about his commercial instincts led him to make craven decisions in the editing room, and his films lost their instinctive brio. His detractors grew gleeful. "Bogdanovich confused proximity with talent," says John Calley, who supervised the production of "What's Up, Doc?" and now runs Sony Pictures. "He thought that if he was close to Orson Welles he *was* Orson Welles. He knew where to put the camera, and he would have been great in the studio system, but once he was allowed to run amok as an auteur he was a hopeless asshole."

"Peter was fine at first," says Larry McMurtry, who wrote the novel "The Last Picture Show" and co-wrote the screenplay with Bogdanovich. "He was a normal little married journalist who happened to have seen a million movies. Then he and Cybill became the King and Queen of Hollywood, and everyone was very, very happy to see them sink. Like many artists, he didn't understand his strengths. Peter wanted to do romantic comedies and be Ernst Lubitsch—but his personality is in the great Serbian manner and, in fact, tragic."

When I mentioned this remark to Bogdanovich, his face fell. "Larry's always had a love-hate thing with me," he said. "But I've always loved him."

Like many seemingly imperious men, Bogdanovich is easily and deeply wounded. Jerry Lewis told me, "Peter takes a sunset personally, and cries when his laundry comes back."

At seven-thirty one morning in January, Bogdanovich sat in a dressing room on the set of "The Sopranos" at Silvercup Studios, in Queens, tying and retying his neckerchief. The studio, a former bakery, was ice cold, and Bogdanovich's quarters were in what used to be a supply closet. "It's grim," he said. "But I don't complain. I'm happy to have the work." When Bogdanovich is recognized on the street, it's mainly for his "Sopranos" role as Elliot Kupferberg, Dr. Melfi's psychotherapist. The show's creator, David Chase, told me that he chose Bogdanovich for the part because of his "mournful, somewhat overthoughtful quality." Even Bogdanovich's habitual Volvic bottle has been written into the show.

Bogdanovich was called into the makeup trailer, where he sat beside Lorraine Bracco, who plays Dr. Melfi. "Baby!" he said. "Sweetie!" she replied. Bracco was eating an omelette and having her hair blown out. That morning, they had two scenes together for the coming season's fourth episode; both concerned Melfi's continuing guilt and anger over her rape. "I don't know *where* I'm going to take the acting on this," Bracco said. Bogdanovich gave her a probing look.

As the actors ran lines together, Bogdanovich remarked to the makeup man, "It's too bad you can't make me look younger." He touched the pouches under his eyes. "Nothing you can do about these?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Oh, well," Bogdanovich said with a little laugh. "Ryan O'Neal told me that he always looked better in the mirror than he expected, but with me it's never as good as I'd hoped."

On the set of Kupferberg's office, the cameras were arranged to film Bracco over Bogdanovich's shoulder, first in a wide shot and then increasingly tightly; later, they would be rotated to shoot him. Filming from this array of angles, a routine practice, is called shooting "coverage." It allows the director latitude to pick and choose moments during editing, and often leads to scenes composed of rapid-fire cuts. Bogdanovich never shoots coverage: he knows the angle he wants, and in effect cuts the film in the camera.

"She's certainly giving us a lot of choices," Ilene Landress, the line producer, murmured to the director, Jack Bender, as Bracco followed her feelings hither and yon, drumming her feet and stressing syllables seemingly at random.

"We can sew a performance together in editing," Bender said.

"It'll go much more quickly when we turn it around. Peter's from the water-

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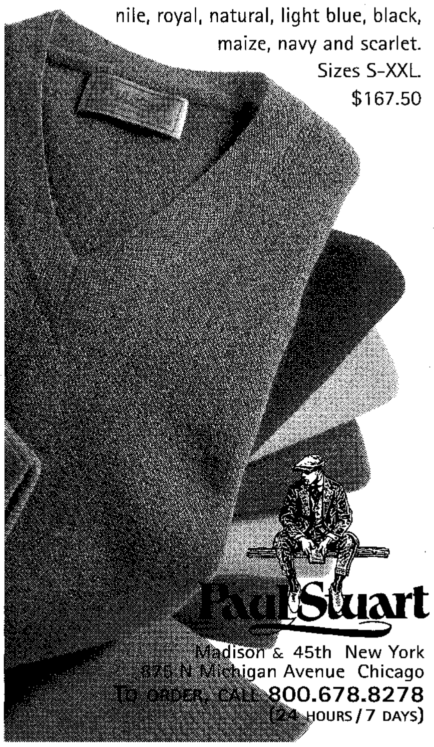

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bottle school of acting," Landress said approvingly. "He rehearses, and picks up the bottle the same way every time."

The crew turned the cameras to film Bogdanovich. When he delivered his lines about a run-in he'd had with a burly fellow in a parking garage who "became quite confrontational," his slight, fussy stress on "quite" made Landress and Bender smile each time.

"Terrific!" Bender said, after the third take. "But you don't have to rush that speech—you can make us feel that this experience frightened you."

"Really?" Bogdanovich said. "My general direction to all actors is 'Faster!' " Faster is always funnier.

The next take was flawless, and Landress said, "Lunch at last." Bracco swept out, pausing to kiss Bogdanovich on the lips: "My darling, you were brilliant!"

"You, too," he said.

"We'll have dinner!"

"Do call."

They hugged, and parted without regret.

OLD SAYBROOK

Pour the bourbon
in a scallop shell
and leave it on the porch,
but know that she's flown south.

Gone, but not to Florida.
As I sleep she reaches
for me with elderly, cured hands.

Her sandals curl by the back door,
white leather peeling from the sole
like afterdeath fingernails unfolding
in the last mute wave of growing old.

—*Dana Goodyear*

With the first play that Bogdanovich directed, an Off Broadway production of "The Big Knife," in 1959, when he was twenty, he inaugurated a pattern of sleeping with his actresses, who remained twenty as he grew older. "I had cast a blond girl named Nancy McCarthy as the starlet," Bogdanovich told me over dinner, "and I couldn't get her to stop 'acting.' So I used the relationship. I rehearsed with her privately and started talking about us, and I said something about her and me and sex—I can't remember what, but it was rough—and she went bananas, got so angry she ripped my shirt. And I said, 'That's it, that's it! That's real!' " He stabbed his chopsticks into the air and laughed at his theatricality, then and now.

"It's an occupational hazard," he continued. "Here's the young, ambitious, beautiful, insecure actress wanting to be molded." The director serenaded his stars with melancholy show tunes like "Glad to Be Unhappy," then supervised their education. He marked up copies of *TV Guide* to indicate which movies Cybill Shepherd should watch; she jokingly called him Sven, for Svengali.

"You know," Bogdanovich said, "my mother, when I was born, was twenty and very attractive. When I had scarlet fever and mumps at the same time and almost died, she really took care of me. So a woman of that age does not seem young to me. It seems . . . normal."

After Shepherd, the next twenty-year-old woman in Bogdanovich's life was Dorothy Stratten, a naïve but charming blonde who had been a *Playboy* Playmate of the Year. They met at the Playboy Mansion, where Bogdanovich was something of a roué in residence, and in early 1980 he gave her a lead role in his romantic comedy "They All Laughed." John Ritter was her co-star, playing a bumbling version of the director himself. Bogdanovich and Stratten fell in love. "The happiest moment of my life was with Dorothy in London, under the trees near the Thames," Bogdanovich said. "We started laughing from sheer happiness. I knew I had a picture in the can that was the best I'd made, and the first that successfully projected my own character."

In August that year, Stratten's estranged husband, Paul Snider, raped her and then blew her head off with a shotgun before turning it on himself. When Bogdanovich heard the news, he fell to the floor screaming. "When Dorothy got killed, it was the atomic bomb," he said. "I lost my mind." For years afterward, he says, he associated directing with Stratten's murder, and dreaded getting behind the camera.

Bogdanovich locked himself in Dorothy's room at his house, filling pages of a notebook with memories of her, pages that eventually became an overwrought book, "The Killing of the Unicorn." In 1981, he bought back "They All Laughed" from Twentieth Century Fox and distributed it himself—a ruinous decision that cost him five million dollars when the movie tanked. Norman Mailer called him after seeing the film and began to critique it, saying, "God, you're such a good director, but I wish you wouldn't write." In a fury, Bogdanovich replied, "I don't give a flying fuck what you think—I've indulged your opinions for twenty years, but you don't know a thing about pictures!" Other friends learned to stay away.

"1985 was the worst," Bogdanovich says. "I was taking sleeping pills and tranquillizers, I was involved in two lawsuits, and I thought I was being bugged. The phone would ring, and I'd jump a foot in the air." He had a hit picture at Cannes that year, "Mask," produced by Universal Pictures and starring Cher and Eric Stoltz, about a spirited boy with a disfiguring disease. But he sabotaged his comeback, suing Universal for having cut two scenes and replaced the film's Bruce Springsteen songs with cheaper Bob Seger tracks. "We had separate press conferences at Cannes," Bogdanovich recalls. "There's Cher, standing two feet from me—she'd sided with Universal, where the money was—and we're separated by walls of loathing. It's not a good career move to sue your studio, or take out ads in the trades against them, as I did, because when you argue with success you look like a tremendous asshole. I remember lying in bed that night and saying, 'I am in deep, deep shit.' "

Bogdanovich had always been very generous with his friends, who called him Mr. Deep Pockets, but he filed for bankruptcy that year, declaring that he had $21.37 in the bank, $25.79 in his pocket, and debts of more than $5.1 million. That August, he had a nervous breakdown, and checked himself into a sanitarium north of Los Angeles. He fasted for nine days, ate nuts and vegetables for nine more, and emerged a vegan. In 1988, he startled the world by marrying Dorothy Stratten's younger sister, Louise. He was forty-nine; she was twenty. She filed for divorce last March. Louise Stratten told me, "Peter played so many roles in my life, including mother and father"—she was twelve when they met—"that I never knew who I was."

Somehow, Bogdanovich managed to hold on to his Bel Air estate until 1991: he's vague about the details, as he is about all practical, legal, and mechanical matters. He misplaced his driver's license a few years ago—deliberately, one suspects. "When I go to Los Angeles," he explains, "Louise sends a car, or Cybill sends a car, or the studio sends a car. Somebody sends a car."

When none of the four movies he made after "Mask" were hits, the studios stopped sending a car. He may have struck bottom artistically in 1988, with the incoherent film "Illegally Yours," which starred Rob Lowe as a lovesick schnook. "Peter was always much more fun when he was directing, but he wasn't directing much," Louise Stratten says. Out of financial necessity, in 1994 he took his first TV-movie job, directing a segment of a film for Showtime called "Picture Windows."

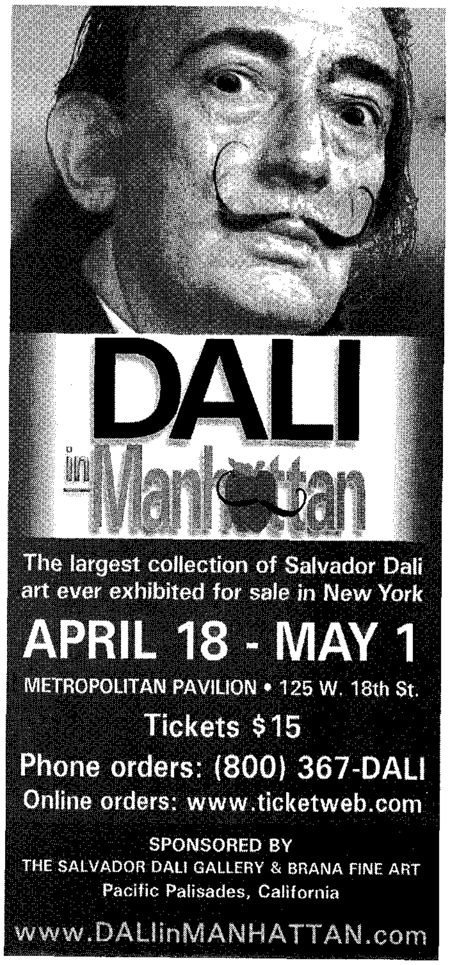
"Frankly, Peter's reputation was terrible by that point," the project's producer, Jeff Freilich, says. "His first day, he had a fit about how a store window looked. It was supposed to resemble a Botticelli painting, and it didn't. I came to the set, it's freezing, it's Toronto, the production designer was in tears, and Peter said, 'I can't shoot this. I'll be in my trailer.' I fixed the window myself, and when Peter came back he said, 'That's perfect—let's shoot.' I realized that he was just looking for a little consideration, and that all this warmth and kindness and intelligence were in there, only cloaked by a terrible sadness, and by the fear that he was going to replicate Orson Welles's career, making his best films first. When I got to know Peter better, I realized that the voice he'd unconsciously used to tell me 'I can't shoot this' was Welles's voice."

One recent afternoon, Bogdanovich sat amid a nest of pillows on his sofa and rubbed his aging cat, Owler, behind the ears. Though his apartment has a temporary feel, like a set, Bogdanovich's move to his childhood neighborhood on the Upper West Side has reinvigorated him. Almost jauntily, he aimed a remote control at a thirty-inch television to start his new movie, "The Cat's Meow."

The film begins in black-and-white with Thomas Ince's funeral—Bogdanovich convinced the producers that Berlin in December would resemble Los Angeles only if it wasn't shot in color. "But I knew that black-and-white would unalterably improve the movie by beginning it with a sense of authenticity. John Ford said"—he switched on Ford's rasp—" 'Real photography is in black-and-white.'

"All the black-and-white, forty-eight setups, was shot in one day," Bogdanovich continued, snapping his fingers on the cuts: bam . . . bam . . . bam. He grabbed the remote to pause the tape and show how he'd slowly dissolved from Ince's coffin to Hearst's yacht, from the prologue to the extended flashback, in color, that is the remainder of the movie—but the tape raced forward. "Fuck! Stop!" he commanded, unavailingly.

Bogdanovich then pointed out how he had linked Hearst, Davies, and Chaplin by introducing each of them from another character's point of view: "Hitch was right: it's all about clarity. As long as the audience is not confused in the first ten minutes, you can lead it anywhere." With growing excitement, he explained his use of deep-focus shots (learned



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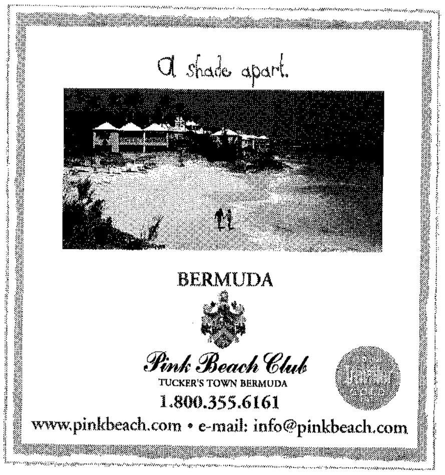

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from Welles) and rapid overlapping dialogue (Hawks).

What followed was a remarkable series of scenes that established the rhythms and dynamics of the cruise. Bogdanovich never cut as the camera glided from place to place, from group to group. The shipmates break into the Charleston three times, and each time it is more of a danse macabre. "Orson told me that choreographing a scene in one piece is"—he thrust his jaw for Welles's gouty tones—" 'what distinguished the men from the boys.' Actors love it, and the audience feels a growing intensity, like they're holding their breath."

Yet Bogdanovich's camera was noticeably less assertive than it was in the final shot of "The Last Picture Show," or the bravura, four-and-a-half-minute opening pan of its 1990 sequel, the underrated "Texasville." "If the picture suffers from anything," Edward Herrmann, who plays Hearst, says, "it's that Peter was excessively structured and reluctant to be freewheeling. You get burned, as he has, and as a director you start wanting to be clear at all costs. It's all a little careful."

Then came a scene in which Joanna Lumley, playing the jaded novelist Elinor Glyn, explains to the others about the California Curse, which afflicts all who come to Hollywood:

> You know the curse is taking hold if you experience the following symptoms: you see yourself as the most important person in any room; you accept money as the strongest force in nature; and, finally, your hold on morality . . . vanishes without a trace.

"That gets huge laughs in California," Bogdanovich said. "I dolly in slowly here, because this is what the movie's about. How could I not identify with the curse? How could I not?"

In a coda, also filmed in black-and-white, Davies and Chaplin (played by Eddie Izzard) say goodbye through a car window. "When Kirsten took his hand and said, 'Goodbye, Charlie,' it killed me. It wasn't written that she would do that." That night, all the actors were at the bar in their Berlin hotel, and Bogdanovich came over, hesitantly, and congratulated Dunst and Izzard. He told them that the last time he'd got teary behind the camera was at the end of "The Last Picture Show," when Timothy Bottoms carried the body of his dead friend up the street. He said he'd walked Bottoms down the block afterward, in silence, with his arm around his shoulders. "The cast was captivated," the producer Jeff Freilich, who was also present, says. "They all applauded."

Over the closing credits, Bogdanovich sang along with Al Jolson, belting out "California, here I come—yeah!" with delight. "There was a German girl on the set, an eighteen-year-old production assistant named Jasmin," he said after a minute. "I was very lonely on that picture, and she was sweet and appealing and I'd smile at her. I liked seeing her around. It suddenly occurred to me that she could be the child Dorothy and I never had. It reverberated: it was the one thing I hadn't mourned. There had been a whole life since she died—twenty years! It gave the last two decades of my life a terrible, tragic distance. But maybe mourning that child was, finally, an end to mourning Dorothy."

He went on, "For years, I've been a person who didn't care if he ever made a movie again. I am now a person who has more films that he wants to make than he ever could. But I'm not looking to make fifty-to-eighty-million-dollar pictures anymore—I'll shoot in digital, anything," he said. "I just want a chance."

He walked me to the door, pausing for one last story. "Did I ever tell you what Cary Grant told me after I'd gotten a bad review or two for 'What's Up, Doc?'? Well, Cary said"—he adopted Grant's famous Bristol accent—" 'Do what I always do when I need cheering up. When the picture opens at Radio City Music Hall, go and stand in the back in a raincoat and sunglasses—well, you won't need that—and listen to the audience.' I took my friend Henry Jaglom"—the writer and director—"and we sat in the back, and people were screaming with laughter. I told Henry, 'When I snap my fingers, they'll laugh.' Snap: bam! Snap: bam! Snap: bam! It was like injecting oxygen!"

Jaglom recalls, "When I tiptoed out, Peter was conducting the audience, saying, 'Now here comes a huge laugh!' "

As I left Bogdanovich's apartment, he said, "I like audiences, that's the thing. I don't like people; people can be a pain in the ass and I don't really know how to deal with them individually. But give me a hundred people and I can probably get a laugh." ♦

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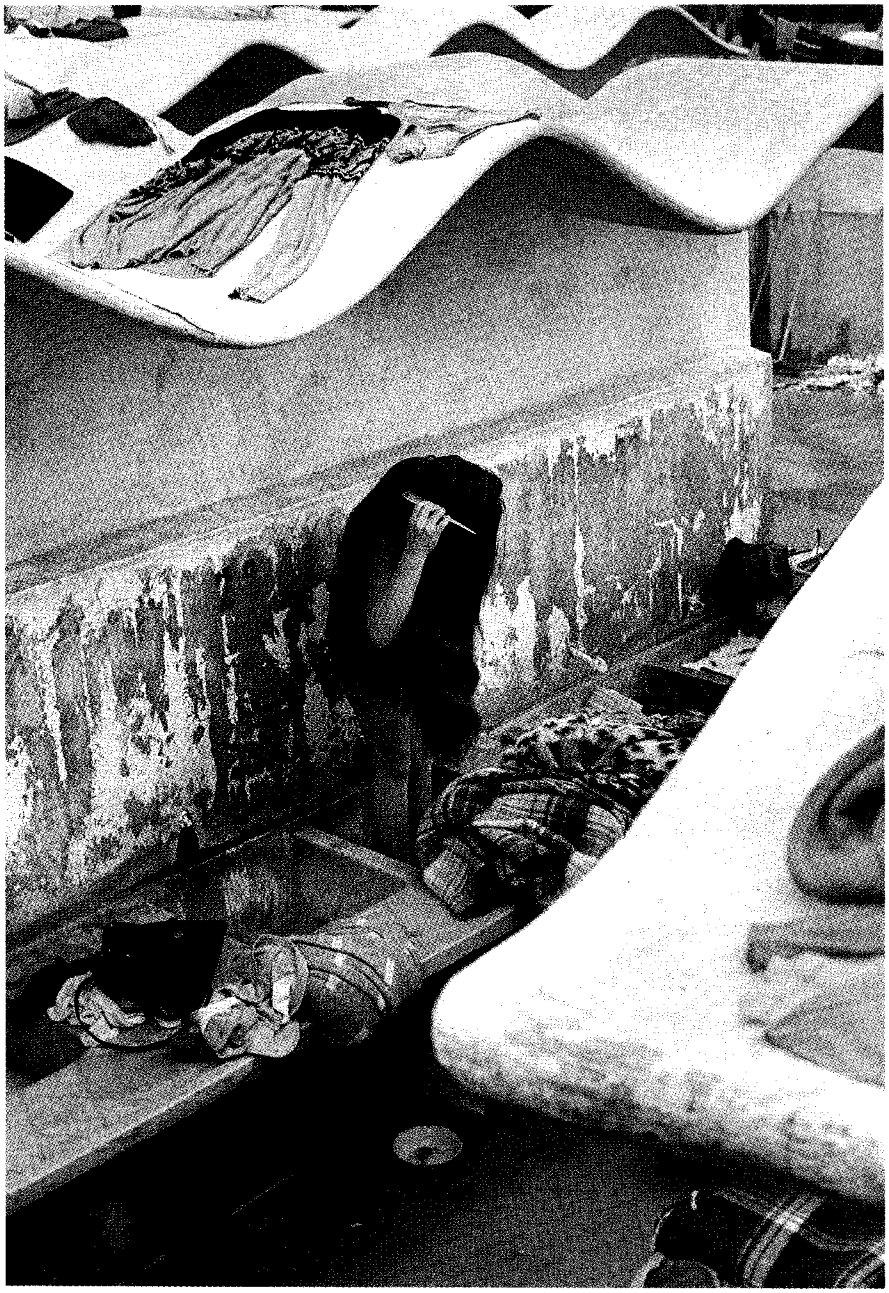
LETTER FROM BOLIVIA

LEASING THE RAIN

The world is running out of fresh water, and the fight to control it has begun.

BY WILLIAM FINNEGAN



In Cochabamba many homes have no running water. Photograph by Gilles Peress.

MAGNUM

In April of 2000, in the central plaza of the beautiful old Andean city of Cochabamba, Bolivia, the body of Víctor Hugo Daza lay on a makeshift bier. Daza, a seventeen-year-old student, had been shot in the face by the Army during protests sparked by an increase in local water rates. These protests had been growing for months, and unrest had also erupted in other parts of the country. The national government had just declared martial law. In Cochabamba, a city of eight hundred thousand, the third largest in Bolivia, a good part of the population was now in the streets, battling police and soldiers in what people had started calling *la guerra del agua*—the Water War. Peasants from the nearby countryside manned barricades, sealing off all roads to the city. The protesters had captured the central plaza, where thousands milled around a tiled fountain and the catafalque of Víctor Daza. Some of their leaders had been arrested and taken to a remote prison in the Amazon; others were in hiding.

The chief demand of the water warriors, as they were called, was the removal of a private, foreign-led consortium that had taken over Cochabamba's water system. For the Bolivian government, breaking with the consortium—which was dominated by the United States-based Bechtel Corporation—was unthinkable, politically and financially. Bolivia had signed a lucrative, long-term contract. Renouncing it would be a blow to the confidence of foreign investors in a region where national governments and economies depend on such confidence for their survival. (Argentina's recent bankruptcy was caused in large part by a loss of credibility with international bankers.) The rebellion in Cochabamba was setting off loud alarms, particularly among the major corporations in the global water business. This business has been booming in recent years—Enron was a big player, before its collapse—largely because of the worldwide drive to privatize public utilities.

For opponents of privatization, who believe that access to clean water is a human right, the Cochabamba Water War became an event of surpassing interest. There are many signs that other poor communities, especially in Third World cities, may start refusing to accept deals that put a foreign corporation's hand on the neighborhood pump or the household tap. Indeed, water auctions may turn out to test the limits of the global privatization gold rush. And while the number of populists opposing water privatization seems effectively inexhaustible—the leaders of the Cochabamba rebellion included peasant farmers and an unassuming former shoemaker named Óscar Olivera—the same cannot be said of the world's water supply. There was a great deal more than local water rates riding on the outcome of this strange, passionate clash in Bolivia.

The world is running out of fresh water. There's water everywhere, of course, but less than three per cent of it is fresh, and most of that is locked up in polar ice caps and glaciers, unrecoverable for practical purposes. Lakes, rivers, marshes, aquifers, and atmospheric vapor make up less than one per cent of the earth's total water, and people are already using more than half of the accessible runoff. Water demand, on the other hand, has been growing rapidly—it tripled worldwide between 1950 and 1990—and water use in many areas already exceeds nature's ability to recharge supplies. By 2025, the demand for water around the world is expected to exceed supply by fifty-six per cent.

Some of the resource depletion is visible from outer space. The Aral Sea, in central Asia, was until recently the world's fourth-largest lake. Then Soviet planners dammed and diverted its source waters for cotton irrigation. The Aral has since lost half its area and three-fourths of its volume. Its once great fisheries have vanished; all twenty-four species native to the lake are believed to be extinct. The local climate has changed, and dust storms now plague the region.

Aquifer depletion, though less visible, is an even more serious problem. There is sixty times as much fresh water stored underground as in lakes and rivers aboveground. And yet parts of northern China, to take one example, are approaching groundwater bankruptcy. Beijing's water table has dropped more than a hundred feet in the past forty years. In the United States, the Ogallala Aquifer, which reaches from Texas to South Dakota and is indispensable to farming on the Great Plains, is being drained eight times faster than it can naturally recharge. In vast areas of India, Mexico, the Middle East, and California's Central Valley the story is the same.

Meanwhile, more than a billion people have no access to clean drinking water, and nearly three billion live without basic sanitation. Five million people die each year from waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and dysentery. This enormous, slow-motion public-health emergency is, in large measure, a result of rapid, chaotic urbanization in the nations of the Global South. Traditional water sources have been polluted, destroyed, overtaxed, or abandoned.

Annual rainfall is not always a measure of water wealth. Poland, for instance, gets plenty of rain, but its lakes, rivers, and groundwater are so polluted that it has as little usable water as Bahrain. Arid regions with the means to pay (Southern California, the Persian Gulf States) already pipe water in from wetter areas. New technologies are being hurriedly developed: huge fabric bags holding millions of gallons of fresh water are being hauled by barges across the Mediterranean, and there are businessmen in Alaska who believe that the state's earnings from fresh water will eventually dwarf its earnings from oil.

For strategic planners at some of the world's largest corporations, the global freshwater shortage coincides opportunely with privatization. According to Johan Bastin, of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, "Water is the last infrastructure frontier for private investors." In the past fifteen years, municipal and regional water systems have been steadily coming onto the international market. Two French corporations, Vivendi Environment and Suez, lead the industry: Vivendi runs eight thousand systems in a hundred countries; Suez has operations in a hundred and thirty countries. The biggest American player, Bechtel, whose directors include former Secretary of State George P. Shultz, has always been notable for its political connections. The United States is itself a field for direct foreign investment in water. Suez is running Atlanta's water system, and Vivendi recently bought U.S. Filter, a national water-services group, for more than six billion dollars.

But the main push is in the Global South, where, over the past twenty years, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have effectively taken control of the economies of scores of nations that are heavily in debt. The Bank and the I.M.F. have been requiring these countries to accept "structural adjustment," which includes opening markets to foreign firms and privatizing state enterprises, including utilities. The Bank once had a quite different approach to public works: it was an enthusiastic financier of monumental projects, and would typically lend the money to build large dams. Many of the dams were spectacular failures, delivering few, if any, benefits (except to politicians and construction firms) while displacing millions of people and leaving behind environmental destruction and public debts. The Bank is now getting out of the dam business and into water privatization. It often works closely with the conglomerates, helping them to acquire the water assets of debtor nations.

The idea behind privatization is to bring market discipline and efficiency to bear on a crucial and frequently corrupt sector. Supporters argue that only private capital—which means, in practice, multinational corporations—can afford to expand water and sanitation networks sufficiently to reach the underserved poor. Since corporations are in business to make money, they often increase water rates. But, in theory, higher water rates can also help to promote conservation. Indeed, privatization advocates say, any valuable commodity—and this includes health care and education—that is provided free eventually gets taken for granted and wasted. According to this argument, turning water into a tradable commodity may even be the only practical way to avoid worldwide shortages and environmental disasters. Public subsidies for essential services such as water may sound like humane policy, but in the real world subsidies benefit the powerful, because they have the resources to manipulate them.

In Cochabamba, which has a chronic water shortage, this unintended consequence was grotesquely clear. Most of the poorest neighborhoods were not hooked up to the network, so state subsidies to the water utility went mainly to industries and middle-class neighborhoods; the poor paid far more for water of dubious purity from trucks and handcarts. In the World Bank's view, it was a city that was crying out for water privatization.

I went to Villa San Miguel, a ramshackle settlement on an arid hillside a couple of miles south of Cochabamba, to find out how the global water business looks from the ground. My guide was a student named Fredy Villagomez, who grew up in Villa San Miguel and helped organize an independent water coöperative for the barrio. The coöperative is one of dozens that have been formed in recent years, in part with international aid. We rode out of the old city in a clattering taxi, down a road jammed with trucks, buses, minivans, donkeys, and pedestrians. It was a hot, clear afternoon; Mt. Tunari, a seventeen-thousand-foot peak, glittered in the northwest. Cochabamba sits in a wide, fertile valley at eight thousand feet—only a middling elevation in Bolivia, where the capital, La Paz, is at twelve thousand feet. To the east, beyond the mountains, lies the Amazon rain forest. Cochabamba is more than four hundred years old, but a recent influx of migrants from the countryside has caused its population to quadruple since 1976. Today, Cochabamba is ringed by dozens of *barrios marginales*—dusty, impoverished settlements that have sprung up to house the newcomers. Basic services—electricity, transportation, sanitation, water—are catch-as-catch-can in the *barrios marginales*.

"We started digging our well in 1994," Villagomez told me. Stocky, soft-spoken, with Indian features and thick eyeglasses, he was leading me down a rocky path to a small cinder-block pump house. "The planning took years. It was an expensive project, and a lot of work. All the residents helped, and we finished in 1997." The coöperative received technical assistance from Danish aid workers; there is a dirt road in the barrio—the Avenida Dinamarca—named for them. Villagomez urged me to peer into the dim pump house, which contained a single electric pump. "The well is a hundred and twelve metres deep," he said.

I thought that sounded awfully deep. Villagomez agreed. "Before, the water under this valley was at only twenty metres."

The well made a major difference to Villa San Miguel. Clean water was suddenly plentiful and relatively cheap—households paid the water coöperative between two and five dollars a month to cover the costs of running the pump and maintaining the system. "It gives water to two hundred and ten families," Villagomez said. "We felt a lot of pride in this achievement."

Then, in 1999, the Bolivian government conducted an auction of the Cochabamba water system as part of its privatization program. The auction drew only one bidder: a consortium called Aguas del Tunari. The controlling partner in the consortium was International Water, a British engineering firm that was then wholly owned by Bechtel. (An Italian company later bought a half interest.) But the government, unfazed by its own weak bargaining position, decided to proceed.

The terms of the two-and-a-half-billion-dollar, forty-year deal reflected the lack of competition for the contract. Aguas del Tunari would take over the municipal water network and all the smaller systems—industrial, agricultural, and residential—in the metropolitan area, and would have exclusive rights to all the water in the district, even in the aquifer. The contract guaranteed the company a minimum fifteen-per-cent annual return on its investment, which would be adjusted annually to the consumer price index in the United States. On coöperative wells such as Villa San Miguel's—which the government hadn't even helped build—the new water company could install meters and begin charging for water. Residents would also be charged for the installation of the meters. These expropriations were legal under a new water law that had been rushed through the Bolivian parliament.

The first Cochabambinos to question the terms of the water privatization were not the small water coöperatives that faced expropriation and crushing bills but local professionals—mainly engineers and environmentalists—and a federation of peasant farmers who rely on irrigation. They began calling public meetings to air their concerns. The government ignored them. At a contract-signing ceremony, the President of Bolivia and the mayor of Cochabamba drank champagne with consortium ex-

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ecutives. The news of impending expropriations and rumors of big water-price hikes began to circulate. The list of alarmed groups—neighborhood associations, water coöperatives, the labor unions—grew. There were street protests, and a broad coalition emerged, called the Coördinator for the Defense of Water and Life, or simply La Coordinadora, led by Óscar Olivera.

Olivera, who is forty-six, at first seems an unlikely leader. He wears a black leather-billed cap, which makes him look like a gentle, would-be street hood from the Beat era. He is small and sad-faced, and he often looks downward, inward—as if he were thinking extremely hard about something unpleasant. It's an especially striking manner in Bolivia, where virtually everyone presents a placid, reserved face to the world. Olivera's grandfather worked in Bolivia's huge tin mines; his father went to work as a carpenter when he was a child. Olivera started out as a machinist in a shoe factory, then went on to work for the factory's union. He is now the head of a confederation of factory workers' unions. Oddly, his air of distraction doesn't seem to unsettle anyone around him. Working people volubly engage him wherever he goes, calling him Oscarito.

"*Compañeros*," Olivera would tell crowds. "It's become a fight between David and Goliath, between poor people and a multinational corporation. They have a lot of money, and they want to take away our water."

The World Bank warmly calls Bolivia an "early adjuster." Other poor, indebted countries have had to be forced to accept structural adjustment, but in Bolivia the World Bank and the I.M.F. have enjoyed a deep understanding with successive governments since 1985. Public enterprises—the railways, the telephone system, the national airlines, the great tin mines of Oruro and Potosí—have been sold, mainly to foreign investors. (This fire sale goes on: a Bolivian government Web site lists dozens of factories, refineries, cement plants, paper mills, and municipal utilities that are still available.)

The tin mines, as it happens, had been nationalized after a popular revolution in 1952, which also destroyed the semi-feudal hacienda system that had been in place in Bolivia for centuries. The United States played an unlikely role in that revolution. The Eisenhower Administration, already busy undermining left-wing governments in Guatemala and Guyana, accepted the new government's plea that it was not Communist (even if some of its allies were) while demanding, and getting, a new investment code that permitted American companies to start operating in Bolivia's eastern oil fields. The United States increased food aid to help the new government survive, and saw to it that "state capitalism" became the official economic model.

An Army coup overthrew the elected government in 1964, leading to the first in a long string of military regimes. (Many of the officers involved had received "counter-insurgency" training in the United States.) They were not, except during a period in the late nineteen-seventies, as violent as those in Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. The unions and the left were repressed, but not so severely as to engender a guerrilla movement. By 1982, however, when civilian rule was finally restored, the Bolivian economy, plundered by the generals, was in ruins, and hyperinflation soon took hold, hitting an annual rate of twenty-five thousand per cent in 1985.

Enter "the Boys," also known as "the Chicago Boys," after a group of economists, educated at the University of Chicago, who implemented free-market policies (known in Latin America as neo-liberalism) in Pinochet's Chile. In Bolivia they were led by Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, a wealthy mine owner who was then Minister of Planning (he was later President). Sánchez worked closely with Jeffrey Sachs, the Harvard economist who became famous for the "shock therapy" he designed for post-Communist Poland.

Bolivia's shock treatment was ferocious. The currency was devalued, all price and wage controls were abolished, government spending was cut, and the state-owned tin mines were effectively closed. The economy went into instant recession; unemployment soared. The inflationary spiral, however, was broken, and good relations between the government and the I.M.F. were restored, initiating a new flow of foreign investment and loans.

And for the past sixteen years Bolivia

NICK DOWNES

"Sorry about our knees touching earlier."

has dutifully followed the dictates of the World Bank and the I.M.F. Most of its people, however, have nothing to show for it. Poverty was never significantly reduced. This is not unusual in Latin America, where the poverty rate is higher today than it was in 1980—after a full generation of nominal democracy and ever-increasing free trade. But Bolivia, like Argentina, really put on what Thomas L. Friedman, the *Times* columnist, calls "the golden straitjacket" of liberalized economic policies. The predicted foreign investment materialized, but the prosperity did not. Landlocked, with a population of eight million and a wretched infrastructure, Bolivia remains the poorest country in South America.

Hugo Banzer, who was Bolivia's military dictator in the nineteen-seventies, became President again after the last election, before stepping down last August in favor of his Vice-President, Jorge Quiroga, because of illness. Quiroga now sits at the head of a "megacoalition." The political class in Bolivia has always been small, rich, and overwhelmingly white, but rarely have the major parties, all business-aligned, shared a ruling philosophy so peaceably as in recent years. The consensus was that nothing and no one should be exempt from the discipline of the market. Then Bechtel came to Cochabamba and, as the local peasants put it, tried to "lease the rain."

When the first monthly bills from Aguas del Tunari arrived, in January, 2000, stunned business owners and middle-class householders began to join the Coordinadora's protests. Some bills had doubled, and ordinary workers now had water bills that amounted to a quarter of their monthly income.

Aguas del Tunari seemed to have given little thought to how its plans would be received in Cochabamba. The International Water executives who were actually doing the work in the city were engineers, not marketers, and, being newly arrived from abroad, they were not attuned to the problems or passions of the Bolivian public. Geoffrey Thorpe, the company's manager, simply said that if people didn't pay their water bills their water would be turned off.

In truth, the price hikes were not as arbitrary as they seemed. The consortium had agreed, in its contract, to expand the city's water system. This was going to be expensive, as was the large-scale repair job required by the deterioration of the existing system. "We were confident that we could implement this program in a shorter period of time than the one required by the contract," Didier Quint, the managing director of International Water, said. He added, however, "We had to reflect in the tariff increase all the increases that had never been implemented before." The consortium had also agreed to finish a stalled dam project known as Misicuni, which would pipe water through the mountains. This aspect of the deal seemed to make little sense—the World Bank had commissioned studies that pronounced Misicuni uneconomic. But the dam project had less to do with how privatization works in theory than with the reality of how multinational corporations must come to terms with local politics.

Plans for the Misicuni Dam have been around for decades. The mayor of Cochabamba, Manfred Reyes Villa, had campaigned hard to complete it and was undeterred by questions about whether it was worth building. Reyes Villa was a popular mayor. People liked to say that his good looks got him the women's vote—he is better known by the nickname Bombón (Sweetie)—but his political instincts are sharp. Despite the widespread poverty in his city, he had pulled off major vanity projects, including a gargantuan white statue of Christ on a hilltop. (This Cristo de la Concordia is supposedly six feet taller than its rival in Rio de Janeiro.) Reyes Villa had been a real-estate developer before he became mayor, and everyone in Cochabamba was quick to note the proximity of most new roads and parks to Bombón's properties. His political party, the New Republican Force, was a personal vehicle as well as a formidable municipal patronage machine, and people said that N.F.R., its Spanish abbreviation, stood for "Nueva Forma de Robar" ("New Form of Robbery"). Reyes Villa lived in conspicuous splendor, and when I visited, soldiers were guarding his estate. There was a wall-size oil painting of his family. "Poverty is growing here, with wealth being concentrated in very few hands," he told me earnestly while we sat in his mansion. Still, Bombón won elections, his party was in President Banzer's megacoalition, and he had national ambitions. More to the point, some of his main financial backers stood to profit fabulously from the Misicuni Dam's construction. When the central government first tried to lease Cochabamba's water system to foreign bidders, in 1997, and did not include Misicuni in the tender, Bombón stopped it cold. It was only the inclusion of the project in the Aguas del Tunari contract that got the Mayor on board.

The Water War began in earnest in February, 2000. "The people went to the plaza to demonstrate against the contract," Fredy Villagomez told me. "The young men were in the city center, trying to hold the plaza. Others were here, maintaining a barricade across the highway. The women were cooking for those on the barricade. There were many campesinos passing by, walking to Cochabamba to join the rebellion." Crowds of *regantes*—peasant irrigators—arrived in the city, marching under village banners, or *wiphala*. The women, *cholitas*, wore fine straw hats and shimmering pleated velvet dresses, and their black hair was braided in long pigtails woven together in back with bright ribbons.

Most of the troops that Óscar Olivera could personally call out for demonstrations were *jubilados*—retired factory workers, old union men shuffling under battered fedoras, like faded figures on a postcard from some antipodal workers' state of another era. For a great many Bolivians, the labor unions retain an association with a time when workers were organized and proud, and when Bolivia's railroads and airlines and mines belonged to Bolivians. It made symbolic sense, then, that Olivera, the leader of the Cochabamba rebellion, was a union man, even though only a minority of Cochabamba's factory workers are still union members. (In the union confederation's dingy offices on the corner of Cochabamba's central plaza, soccer trophies fill the shelves, but when I asked about them the receptionist explained that the unions could no longer field a team.)

The growing crowds of Coordinadora supporters were drawn instead from the informal sector of pieceworkers, sweatshop employees, and street venders that has expanded enormously

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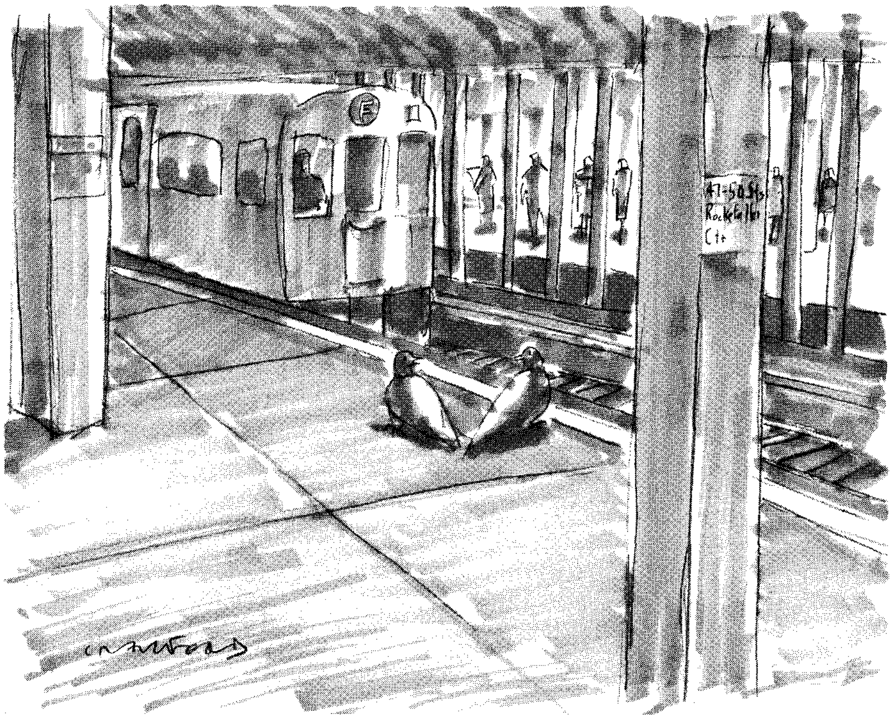

"Wouldn't it be faster if we just flew to Brooklyn?"

• •

since the advent of structural adjustment and the closing of the tin mines. These men and women, most of them young, had more flexible schedules than workers in regular factories. Students from the University of Cochabamba, some of them middle-class anarchists, also joined in, carrying banners denouncing the World Bank, the I.M.F., and neoliberalism. But the front-line troops, particularly after the conflict sharpened and the authorities began to fire live bullets, proved to be the city's street children—an adolescent army of the homeless which has been growing in recent years.

The government's response escalated steadily. After the first protests, a ministerial delegation was sent to Cochabamba. By the end of the month, the water-price hikes had been rolled back, but the protests continued. Then the government sent in troops from Oruro and La Paz. Nearly two hundred protesters were arrested, and seventy civilians and fifty-one policemen were wounded. The Catholic archbishop of Cochabamba tried to mediate. In March, the Coordinadora held an unofficial referendum, counted nearly fifty thousand votes, and announced that ninety-six per cent favored the cancellation of the contract with Aguas del Tunari. "There is nothing to negotiate," the government replied.

In April, protesters again occupied Cochabamba's central plaza, and when the Coordinadora's leaders, including Óscar Olivera, arrived at the governor's office for a meeting they were arrested. After they were released the following day, some went into hiding. Then more leaders were arrested, and some were taken to a jungle prison in the Amazon. The house of Óscar Olivera's parents was searched four times.

Protests had begun to break out in other parts of the country—in La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí, and in many rural communities—and national peasant organizations held demonstrations. By this point, most of the country's major highways were blocked.

Bolivia's rulers have always harbored a deep fear that the country's Indian majority might one day rise up and kill them in their beds—or, more realistically, trap them in their cities. In 1781, an Indian rebel army, having killed all the Spaniards in a regional capital, laid siege to La Paz for several months. The rebellion was ultimately defeated by troops brought from Buenos Aires, but white Bolivia's fear of a horizon suddenly filling with angry Indians has never fully dissipated, and on April 8, 2000, the Banzer government declared a national state of siege. This meant martial law, and it allowed for mass arrests. The minister who announced the decree also said—in a remark that Bechtel's spokesman in London quickly picked up—that the uprising in Cochabamba was being financed by *narcotraficantes*.

The state of siege, along with the comments about drug traffickers, backfired in Cochabamba. The small coca-leaf farmers, known as *cocaleros*, from the lowlands east of Cochabamba, had indeed joined the protesters, but ordinary Bolivians draw a sharp distinction between *cocaleros* and the wealthy, Army-bribing, customs-bribing *narcotraficantes*. Many of the *cocaleros* are ex-miners. Water is not their issue—they are more concerned about a coca-eradication program sponsored by the United States—but their natural sympathy was with the protesters. And the *cholitas* in their velvet dresses, and the *jubilados* marching in their rumpled fedoras, and the water warriors in their bandannas did not appreciate the suggestion that they were insincere.

The day the state of siege was declared, the main plaza in Cochabamba was filled with people. The Army fired tear gas into the narrow streets of the old city, where protesters had built barricades. Demonstrators blocked all roads into the city; the government cut off power to local radio and television stations. Middle-class matrons took wounded protesters into their homes and beauty salons to nurse them, and bowls of vinegar mixed with water and baking powder—useful for soaking bandannas for protection from tear gas—appeared outside a thousand respectable doorways.

Then, from behind a line of military police, a sharpshooter in civilian clothes fired a rifle into a crowd of unarmed civilians. He was caught on video by a Bolivian television crew, and was later identified as Robinson Iriarte de la Fuente, a Bolivian Army captain who had been trained in the United States. Víctor Hugo Daza, the seventeen-year-old student, who was on his way home from a part-time job, was, according to eyewitnesses, among the crowd that Iriarte fired into. He was hit in the face and died instantly. Dozens of other people were treated for bullet wounds. By the time Daza had been raised onto his bier and the police and the Army had been repeatedly prevented from seizing his body, there was clearly no future for Aguas del Tunari in Cochabamba.

The company's executives were told that the police could no longer guarantee their safety, and fled Cochabamba for the lowland city of Santa Cruz. They may have noted that, several weeks earlier, Mayor Reyes Villa had left their side. When the people took to the streets en masse, Bombón had assessed their mood and stepped away from Aguas del Tunari so fast that it was as if he had never seen these foreigners before. He was not the only one trying to distance himself; when water privatization collapsed in Cochabamba, the World Bank's representatives insisted that the fiasco had nothing to do with them. The government informed Aguas del Tunari that, because the company had "abandoned" its concession, its contract was revoked. (The company argued that it had not left voluntarily but had been pushed out.) The day after Víctor Hugo Daza's funeral, Óscar Olivera announced the consortium's departure to thousands of exhausted, disbelieving demonstrators from the balcony of his union's offices above the plaza.

The Coordinadora had swept the field so completely that a new national water law was immediately passed—"written from below," as the water-rights campaigners say. Banged together by parliamentarians and water specialists from the Coordinadora who gathered in La Paz, the new law gave legal recognition to *usos y costumbres*—traditional communal practices—by protecting small independent water systems, guaranteeing public consultation on rates, and giving social needs priority over financial goals. This triumph seemed to the water warriors too good to be true, and it was. Laws in Bolivia are implemented—if, indeed, they are ever implemented—only after bylaws have been attached and approved, and the government soon made it clear that, in the case of the new water law, this process could take years.

After the Bechtel consortium's exit, the management of Cochabamba's water was returned to the old public utility known as SEMAPA, which was thoroughly overhauled. The new board of directors included Coordinadora representatives, who vowed to treat water as a "social good" and not as an ordinary commodity. But so far the fervently envisioned transformation of Cochabamba's water system has been fitful at best. Service is still poor. Even within the existing network, many neighborhoods have service only occasionally, and the valley's aquifer continues to sink. Corruption has reportedly been reduced, but an intolerable situation persists: the poor in Cochabamba, those who are not on the network and who have no well, pay ten times as much for their water as the relatively wealthy residents who are hooked up. The new SEMAPA, having driven away international capitalists, desperately needs new capital. Since simply raising water rates across the board is politically impossible, that means new partners or new loans.

The Bolivian government has little interest in seeing the new SEMAPA succeed. Neither is it likely to get much help from the World Bank. In recent years, the Bank has been widely accused of not fulfilling (or even seriously pursuing) its self-proclaimed mission of fighting poverty, and, in response, has changed its description of its mandate, emphasizing "empowerment" and "pro-poor coalitions" over fiscal discipline. What its officials do when confronted by an actual pro-poor coalition is, of course, another matter. In Bolivia, its representatives have never met with the leaders of the Coordinadora.

The Coordinadora's leadership knows that an old-fashioned state-centered solution to Cochabamba's water crisis would be unsatisfactory. The new SEMAPA has not won the hearts of many in Cochabamba—it is, after all, still the water company. But, its supporters point out, at least it is Bolivian.

"The tragedy is that the solution to Cochabamba's water problem has been pushed off for at least another five years," Michael Curtin, a Washington-based executive who became president of Aguas del Tunari after its removal from Cochabamba, told me. Curtin had been involved in the deal as a consultant for International Water, and represents the interests of Bechtel and its partners in talks with the Bolivian government. In

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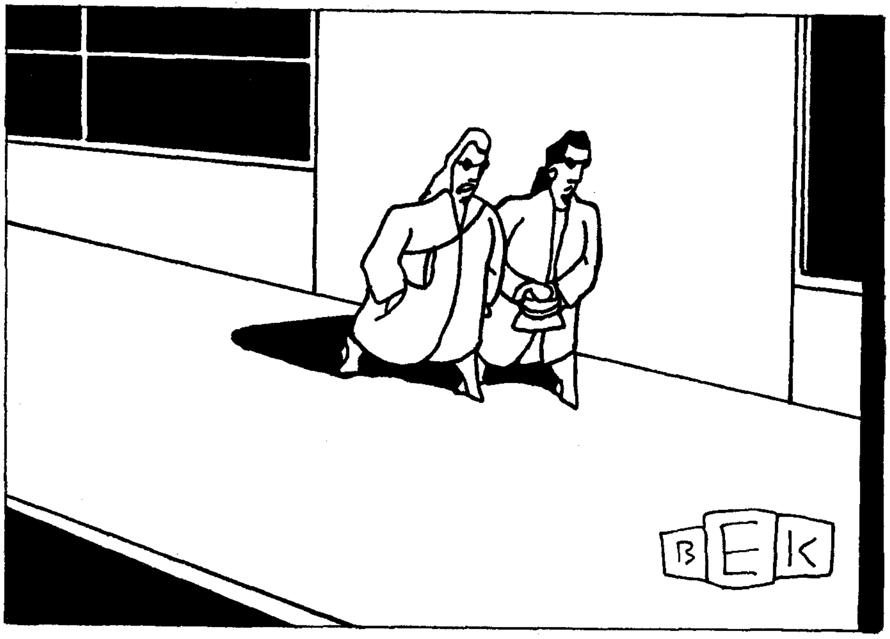
November, 2001, after negotiations had deadlocked, the consortium filed a complaint against the Bolivian government in a World Bank trade court in Washington. The complainant was Aguas del Tunari, but the political weight was supplied by Bechtel. The company's claim is being made under a bilateral investment treaty between Bolivia and, of all places, the Netherlands. It seems that International Water, which was originally registered in the Cayman Islands (which has no comparable investment treaty with Bolivia), moved its registration to Amsterdam soon after the Cochabamba contract was signed. Bechtel and its partners are demanding at least twenty-five million dollars in compensation for the broken contract. While trade-court proceedings are notoriously slow, nobody seems to believe that the Bolivians can afford that kind of money.

Still, the prospect of one more financial burden is the least of the government's worries in connection with what people in Bolivia refer to as the Bechtel case. The truly frightening part is the impact that the Water War has had on the foreign-investment climate. "Right now the situation is 'You can't trust Bolivia,' " Curtin said. The United States Embassy agrees. "It was a pretty significant blow," an Embassy official told me. A subsequent auction to sell the La Paz telephone company drew no bidders at all. The United States has not yet decided, the official added, whether to formally designate the breaking of the contract in Cochabamba an expropriation. That will depend on the settlement, if there is one, that is reached in the case. Having the United States label the episode an expropriation would be a blow to Bolivia's hope of seeing any new foreign investment in the near future.

And yet Jorge Quiroga, Bolivia's new President, is bullish on his country's prospects. Quiroga, who is forty-one, is tall and fair. He graduated in 1981 from the University of Texas, where he studied industrial engineering, and worked for I.B.M. in Austin as a self-described "corporate yuppie" before moving back to Bolivia with his American wife, Virginia. "We will be the vital heart of South America," Quiroga predicted repeatedly when I visited him in his ornate, republican-era office in La Paz. Gas exports will lead the way. A long-awaited transcontinental highway connecting Brazil and Chile will pass through Cochabamba. Fibre-optic cables will be laid. One of the biggest things delaying Bolivia's economic progress? The hypocrisy of the United States and Europe on free trade. "Bolivia is the most open economy in Latin America," Quiroga said. Meanwhile, American and European farm subsidies, along with tariffs on textiles and agricultural products, make it impossible for Bolivia to sell its exports in the Global North. "They tell us to be competitive while tying our arms behind our backs."



"What is this endless series of meaningless experiences trying to teach me?"

When I asked him about the Water War, he looked uncomfortable. "A lot of things certainly could have been different along the way, from a lot of different actors," he said. But, like Michael Curtin, he was certain of one point: "The net effect is that we have a city today with no resolution to the water problem." In the end, he said, it will be "necessary to bring in private investment to develop the water."

Quiroga insists that the World Bank and the I.M.F. are not running Bolivia. If it sometimes looks as if they are, that is because technocrats in the government (he has been one) use what he calls "the I.M.F. blackmail" on politicians—warning them that loans will stop if hard fiscal choices are not made, and thus giving them some cover, when in truth there have been no direct threats from the Bank or the I.M.F.

The World Bank now requires all its client governments to submit a "poverty-reduction strategy," and Quiroga gave me a sketch of Bolivia's. He had recently been to a meeting of the World Economic Forum—he goes almost every year—and his remarks struck me as having an up-to-the-minute cosmopolitan gloss. The Bolivian state has "socialized" its spending away from production toward education and health, he said, because that's the one sure route to real development. Quiroga sighed. "But we'll still be talking about poverty reduction twenty-five years from now, when one of my daughters is sitting here being interviewed."

Some things, certainly, never change. Last month, Captain Robinson Iriarte was acquitted of all responsibility for the death of young Víctor Hugo Daza. The case had been transferred from the civilian criminal-justice system—no judge was willing to hear it—to a military tribunal, which has final jurisdiction over the cases it hears. Upon his acquittal, Iriarte was promoted to the rank of major.

Claudia Vargas, a lawyer in La Paz who worked for Bolivia's fledgling utility-regulation body, travelled often to Cochabamba. The leaders of the new SEMAPA, she told me, were unnecessarily preoccupied with the idea that the central government was going to make another attempt to privatize the city's water. "I tell them, 'Don't *worry*. Nobody is going to try that again for a long time.' Really, they have a lot of problems in Cochabamba now, and that is not one of them."

Vargas is young and chic, and she had recently finished a postgraduate course in development administration in thoroughly deregulated Britain. She nonetheless has an unfashionable enthusiasm for regulation. It's still poorly understood in Bolivia, she thinks, and it got a very bad name in Cochabamba when her boss (now retired) appeared to shill both for the government and for Bechtel's consortium, which he was supposed to regulate. Vargas was appalled both by the Aguas del Tunari contract and by the consortium's performance. She thinks that the members of the Coordinadora "are still the good guys in the film," but that some of them are, at best, misguided. "In the name of *usos y costumbres*, a lot of terrible things are done." Water-truck operators, for instance, "drill polluted water and sell it. They waste a lot of water. But the world is changing. Within five years, they will be charged for water—and they will be regulated."

Trying to find a path outside the binary of state or market control, the Coordinadora has no model. Its leaders vow to treat water as a "human right," and yet they know it cannot be provided free. They also know that their water company—and Bolivia generally—cannot survive without foreign investment. Meanwhile, Manfred Reyes Villa has started making his move to regain control of SEMAPA. In elections to be held soon, his party will run candidates for all the seats on the water company's board that are now occupied by the Coordinadora. Their campaigns will be far more extravagant and crowd-pleasing than anything Óscar Olivera and his colleagues are likely to stage. Bombón knows his constituency. He has also announced his candidacy for President.

The juggernaut of water privatization has hardly slowed. Bechtel, through International Water, has closed two major water deals in the past year, winning a thirty-year concession for the port city of Guayaquil, in Ecuador, and a controlling stake in the water company of Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. Many water privatizations seem likely to deliver eventually on their backers' promises of improved service. In Chile, fierce opposition to concessions has been overcome in several cities by innovative price structures, including water vouchers, that assure poor residents of an adequate supply of clean water.

At the same time, water privatizations have been backfiring all over Latin America. In Panama, popular anger about an attempted privatization helped cost the President his bid for reëlection. Vivendi, the French multinational, had its thirty-year water contract with the Argentine province of Tucumán terminated after two years because of alleged poor performance. Major water privatizations in Lima and Rio de Janeiro have had to be cancelled because of popular opposition. Trinidad recently allowed a management contract with a British water giant to expire. Protests against water privatization have also erupted in Indonesia, Pakistan, India, South Africa, Poland, and Hungary.

One large-scale Bolivian water privatization that the World Bank still points to with pride took place a few years ago in La Paz. The concession was awarded to Suez, which honored its commitment to expand the La Paz water network to several poor neighborhoods just outside the city. This area, known as El Alto, is home to nearly three quarters of a million people, virtually all of them Indians recently arrived from the countryside. But a problem emerged. It seemed that the people in El Alto weren't using enough water. Accustomed to Andean peasant life, they were extremely careful with water, never wasting a drop, and they continued to be so even after they had taps installed in their homes. This was good conservation, but it was bad for Suez's bottom line, and the corporation was disappointed in the return on its investment. After it appeared to raise its rates, which were pegged to the dollar, when the local currency was devalued the general happiness with the contract evaporated and residents began to complain about the service. When I was in La Paz, the people of El Alto were marching against Suez. When I asked a World Bank official about the situation, she agreed that there was a basic problem: those Indians needed to learn to use more water. ♦

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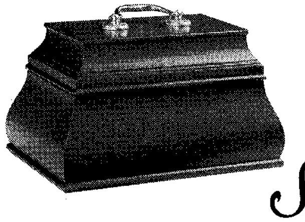
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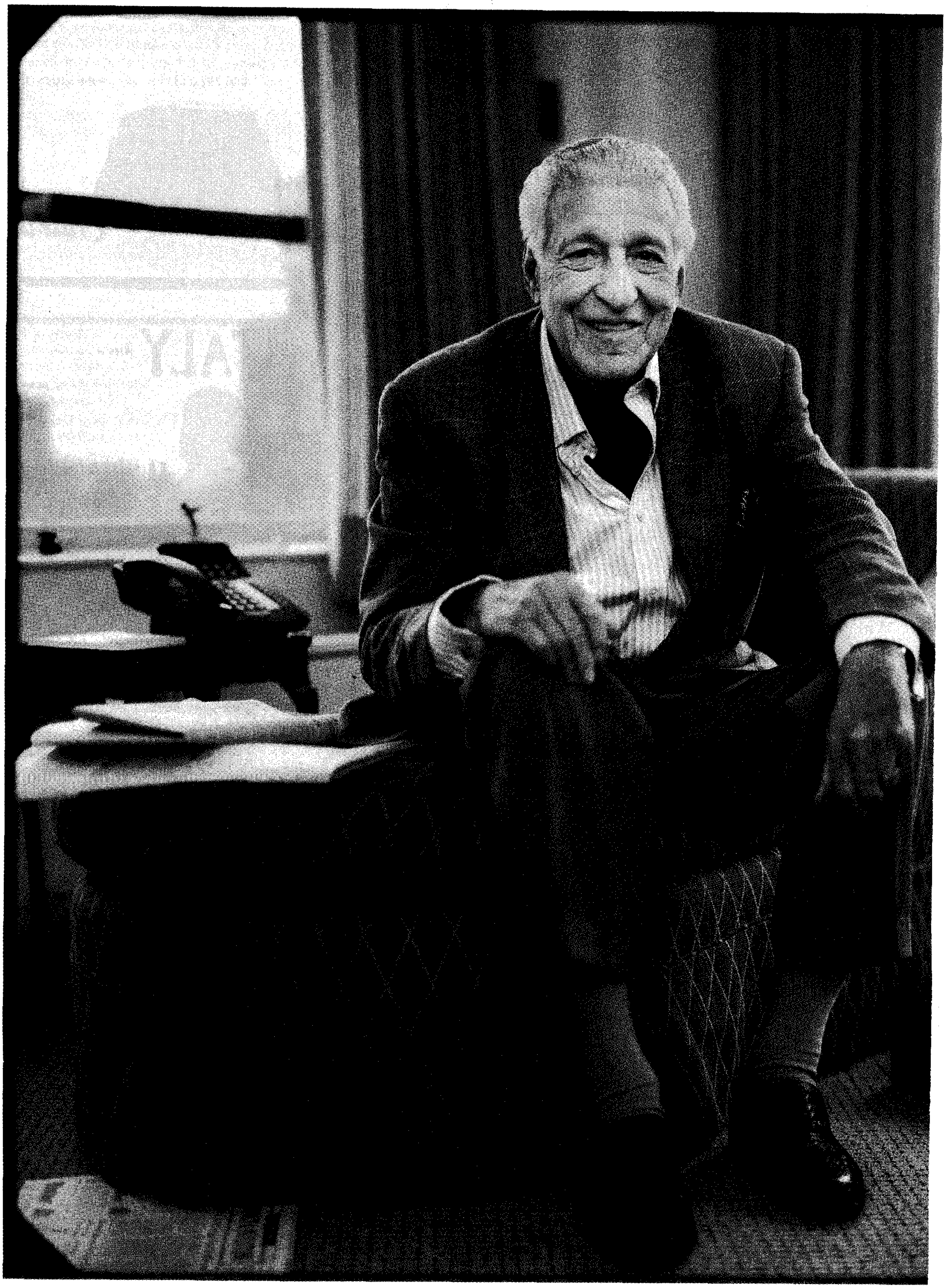


CORBIS SABA

PROFILES

SHOWBOAT

Roger Straus and his flair for selling literature.

BY IAN PARKER

A few months ago, Roger Straus, the founder and newly appointed chairman of the literary house of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, gave a dinner party for twenty-five or so people in a private hotel dining room in Frankfurt, at the time of the international book fair. Before he sat down to eat oysters and venison, Straus, who is eighty-five, moved through the room with smiling, slouchy glamour, hands in pockets, bending back a little from the waist as if about to sing "Fly Me to the Moon." He wore a fine double-breasted pin-striped suit. His wavy white hair was swept from his face. He welcomed male friends by gripping their shoulders with both hands. He kissed some women three times: once on each cheek, and then again on the forehead. He said the same thing to both men and women: "Hi, baby!"

Straus is a link to a publishing past that seems simpler and more heroic than today's. His guests were Europe's grandest publishers—one British editor calls them the Nobel Squad—and the mood was congenial and easy but ceremonial. "Half of European literature is represented at this table," one guest said. Then she added, almost seriously, "If you get this invitation, you have arrived at Olympus. There is no way up from here." A knife struck a wineglass, and Siegfried Unseld, the head of Suhrkamp, the prestigious German literary publishing house—a prizefighter of a man wearing a funereal suit—stood and made a toast to Straus, his approximate contemporary. "When we meet, we always try to find out, Has the other one all the marbles?" he said, speaking slowly. Straus blew an affectionate Vegas kiss across the room. Inge Feltrinelli, the president of the Italian publishing house Feltrinelli, and the widow of its radical millionaire founder, was watching admiringly. "I met Roger a long time ago in New York," she said, in heavily accented English. "He looked like the Great Gatsby. He was the antithesis of Brooks Brothers. He was the most elegant man you have ever seen—absolutely dashing, sexy. Cufflinks this size! And the ties . . ." To represent an ascot in full bloom, she made a big, rolling motion under her chin with both hands. "One time we had lunch—a blond, blond cashmere jacket. I touched it. I said, 'Roger, you're divine.' And then after lunch he posted Susan Sontag's letters for her. She was too much *in her work* for this banal task. You know, he is a gentleman who takes care of a girl."

For a man whose company is now owned by one of Germany's largest media conglomerates, Roger Straus is oddly persuasive in the role of bespoke independent American publisher. Since the nineteen-sixties, as all but a few American publishing houses have become drawn into multinational companies, Straus—the publisher of Isaac Bashevis Singer, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Mario Vargas Llosa, and John McPhee, among others—has been the man whom reporters called to hear how corporate ownership was screwing up the rest of the book trade. Straus would describe those responsible as "spaghetti salesmen," or something similar. But in late 1994, after conceding that his son, Roger Straus III, had no interest in filling his shoes, Straus announced that he had sold F.S.G. to the Georg von Holtzbrinck Publishing Group, in Stuttgart, which owns eighty subsidiaries in Europe and the United States, including Henry Holt, St. Martin's, and Picador. Straus re-

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTIN SCHOELLER

Straus turned a small publisher of historical novels and nutrition manuals into America's foremost literary house. "Power broker?" he says. "I'm a pimp."

mained the head of F.S.G., which he has run since 1946, but, to the surprise of his friends and his several enemies, it somehow happened that he also remained a symbol of plucky anti-corporate American publishing. F.S.G.'s apparent independence says something about the laissez-faire style of the von Holtzbrinck group. But it chiefly points to the seductive force (and the commercial value) of the persona that Straus presents so irresistibly to the world, and which has remained unchanged: the ascots and lilac socks; the flirtatious, confiding manner of a nineteen-fifties Hollywood gossip columnist; the flagrant disregard for the new shape of American publishing ("huge corporate bullshit"); the episodes of professional vengeance; and the almost pretentiously ramshackle offices on Union Square. Straus has continued to be the Last Great Gentleman Publisher.

"A lot of people still think we *are* independent," Straus told me in Frankfurt, a day or two before the dinner. We were sitting at F.S.G.'s small open-plan stand, in a corner of the international hall at the book fair. Across the aisle was the Random House stand, which looked like a full-sized Starbucks, with brightly lit portraits of John Grisham and Bill Bryson on the walls. "Look at that real estate, for Christ's sake," he said, smiling. "You could land a fucking airplane in that." His growl has force but little volume, and sometimes it is hard to hear much more than the expletives, the elegant archaic slang, and the names of Farrar, Straus authors who have won the Nobel Prize in Literature. ("Joseph Brodsky put me down as next of kin. . . . Took these two stew bones out to lunch . . . three or four Martinis . . . everybody says he's a prick but that's nothing to do with the price of fish.")

Straus has been attending the Frankfurt Book Fair since 1961. "Before, as a Jew, I didn't feel comfortable," he told me. But friends, including the London publisher George Weidenfeld, finally persuaded him. "They said, 'Come on, Roger, we'll take you to dinner.' And by that time things were calmer in my head. I should have come sooner. I like it—it's sort of kicky." Today, Straus and his longtime executive assistant, Peggy Miller—a tall, chic, ironic woman a generation younger than he is—move through Frankfurt like movie stars. "This is the part of publishing Roger loves the most—the international brotherhood," Jonathan Galassi, the president of F.S.G., said.

Straus turned a small postwar publisher of historical novels and nutrition manuals into America's foremost literary house, and to watch him at work in Frankfurt was to get a sense of the style that helped him pull this off. That morning, between meetings, he had been trying to bring together two friends in the brotherhood: one had a publishing company to sell, the other was looking to buy one. ("Power broker? I'm a pimp.") Younger editors and agents were paying their respects—"Who the fuck was that?" Straus whispered, laughing, as they walked away—and old friends were dropping by to hear this year's Nobel Prize rumors. Earlier, Straus had taken the trouble to goad an old antagonist while both waited for an elevator, and now he smiled guiltily at the remembrance of it. ("He loves having enemies—it's really very invigorating for him," Galassi says.) But into the gossip and cheerful slander Straus always wove a pitch for a "marvellous" new book, an editor who was about to join the firm, or the virtues of the F.S.G. children's list. He was working the hall. As the writer Nadine Gordimer later said, "Roger is not an august ornament. He goes into the office every day. He reads everything. He cares what happens to your work." Derek Walcott, one of the poets on F.S.G.'s list, and a good friend of Straus's, says, "He does this thing, which is 'I'm just a dumb Jewish guy.' But in fact he's a man of great sensitivity, and a reader."

Authors say that the guiding Straus principle is personal loyalty to them and their work. "Many publishers actually despise their authors and get into ego wars with them," Roger Straus III, who once worked at F.S.G., and is now an architectural photographer, told me. "But his ego and his authors' ego are one; there's no space between his publishing house and their work." The poet Seamus Heaney says, "What's great about Roger is the head-on strength of body and personality, the forthrightness, the swiftness of his judgments, the immense largesse."

While Straus and I were at the F.S.G. stand, news came that the company's long-term faith in the novelist Jonathan Franzen—whose second book was not a commercial success—had been vindicated. Franzen's new novel, "The Corrections," had kept its place at the top of the *Times* best-seller list for a second week. "Now, that's a lot of fucking tangerines," Straus said—although he was half-seriously anxious (two loyalties in conflict here) that Franzen would embarrass him by outselling the company's 1987 best-seller, "The Bonfire of the Vanities," by Tom Wolfe. Straus regards Wolfe's friendship and fidelity to F.S.G. as a great prize. "If Franzen overtakes Wolfe, then that's bad," Straus said. "I'll kill him. I'll cut it back somehow, dump a hundred thousand copies in the East River."

Straus said that Franzen had written "a real Amaahhrican" novel. His accent is as grand as his manner, and both suggest "The Philadelphia Story," forgotten cocktail crazes, and prewar tennis tournaments. Straus's mother was Gladys Guggenheim, and his father, also Roger, was of the Straus family that ran Macy's after 1896; he worked for his father-in-law, Daniel Guggenheim. Straus's paternal grandfather, Oscar Straus—"an amazing character, a wonderful man"—was Secretary of Commerce and Labor under Theodore Roosevelt, and America's first Jewish Cabinet member. Straus divides his leisure time between an apartment on the Upper East Side and a house that Oscar built in Purchase, New York, where he has forty acres, a small swimming pool, and prize peonies. For years, he used to drive between town and country in a tan Mercedes convertible.

Straus's early upbringing was "semiformal," he said. The family home was on Park Avenue at Eighty-second Street; his weekends were spent at Purchase, or on the Guggenheim estate at Port Washington, on Long Island (starched collars, indoor and outdoor tennis, a bowling alley). Straus's father was good-looking, smart, and cold, and he was never impressed by his son's career. ("I was the middle one, and that's the usual way," Straus, who has an older brother and a younger sister, says.) The senior Straus sent his son to St. George's School, in Newport, Rhode Island, which rarely took Jewish students; Straus found the "mild" anti-Semitism there isolating. He left St. George's in his junior year, without graduating, and idled for a while. "I was a jock. I dribbled my way through life," he said. His family pushed him toward Hamilton College, which he attended for two years, and then—inspired by summers he had spent in high school working on the White Plains *Daily Reporter*—he transferred to the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri. In 1937, before moving to Missouri, he began dating a childhood friend, Dorothea Liebmann, the granddaughter of the founder of Rheingold beer, who was attending Sarah Lawrence; they were married a year later. She is a writer of fiction and memoirs, and likes to dress in Edwardian style. Their son, Roger, is now fifty-eight.

Straus graduated in 1939, and the couple moved back to New York City, along with two trust funds. Straus got a job at the *Daily Reporter*, but then left to become an editorial assistant at the magazine *Current History*, where as a side project he began packaging books for Putnam. This was his "first nose" into publishing. One of the books, "War Letters from Britain," a joint project with the British writer Diana Forbes-Robertson, was a successful collection of first-person accounts of the London blitz. Straus says it was designed as "propaganda, pure and simple."

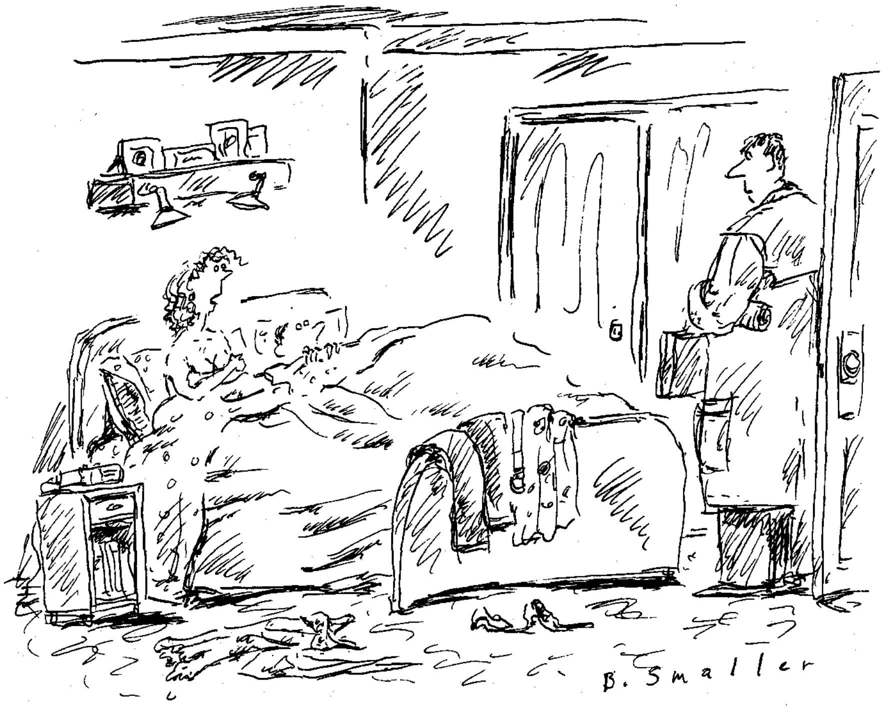
When America entered the war, a wealthy playboy friend of Straus's, James Van Alen (who later invented the tennis tiebreaker and founded the International Tennis Hall of Fame), was asked to run the New York office of the Magazine and Book Section of the Navy Office of Public Relations. He invited Straus to join him. Straus failed the Navy medical, owing to a spinal infection, and initially had to be employed as a civilian, but the Navy found a way to sneak him into uniform; he eventually rose to the rank of lieutenant. He worked in a two-and-a-half-room office on Fifth Avenue, writing speeches, giving clearance to reporters travelling overseas, and approving magazine copy, including articles for *The New Yorker*. He also took on some intelligence duties, and once "snuffed around" Bermuda after the capture of a German submarine.

"This better be an emergency."

At the end of the war, Straus weighed careers in journalism and publishing. "Newspapers wrap up fish," he told me. "Books are in the library forever. I decided to start a book-publishing house of my own." He approached John Farrar, who had co-founded Farrar & Rinehart in 1929 but no longer had a job when he returned from the war. After hesitating, Farrar agreed to join him as a partner. Straus's family allowed him thirty thousand dollars against his future inheritance. Another fifty thousand was invested by playboys including Julius (Junkie) Fleischmann, the yeast and gin heir who ran the Farfield Foundation, a C.I.A. dummy that funnelled money to organizations like the Congress for Cultural Freedom. (He was also a cousin of Raoul Fleischmann, this magazine's first publisher.) When Van Alen agreed to make a large investment, Straus assumed that the company would be Farrar, Straus & Van Alen. According to Robert Giroux, Straus's future partner, Van Alen thought about this, then came back to Straus. "I'm going to join up with you, Roger, but I can't have my name in the firm," he said sheepishly. "Why not?" Straus asked. "My mother said. It's because you're a Jew."

Straus negotiated with the Navy to take a lease on the Fifth Avenue office. One morning in the summer of 1946, when Straus was twenty-nine, he took down the sign that read "Magazine and Book Section, Navy Department, Office of Public Relations," and put up his own sign: "Farrar, Straus & Co." (One newspaper reporter mistakenly referred to the company as Farrar, Straus & Cox. This led to the invention, in the office, of a Colonel Cox, who was responsible when a book was delayed at the printer, or when the manuscript of a friend had to be rejected.)

Straus was joining a New York publishing world of a dozen or so fairly small literary houses run by men whose names were on their letterheads: Scribner, Knopf, Rinehart, Harcourt, Brace. He describes it now as a "gentleman's profession." An educated man with a taste for commerce could whet that appetite in a civilized milieu. "My ambition wasn't financial, in a funny kind of way," he says. "It just interested me—how to



"So now you're going to tell me what friends I can have?"

sell good books." Publishing companies tend to divide responsibilities between publishers, who see to the marketing and distribution of books, and editors, who work closely with authors; Straus saw himself as more of a publisher, at a time when publishing still rewarded the kind of aristocratic advocacy that Straus was suited to provide. As Jonathan Galassi put it, "For Roger, publishing is a man-to-man operation. It's mano a mano. Between this honcho and that honcho." Straus had charmed for America, in the Navy's public-relations office, and now he would charm for the purposes of business. "I was persuading an author why he should publish with me rather than somebody else—what I could do for him that somebody else can't do," Straus recalls. Roberto Calasso, the publisher of Adelphi Edizioni, in Milan, and the author of "The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony," told me, "Roger has a strong sense of the tribal rituals of the trade. He gives importance to that ritual. He doesn't think publishing starts and finishes with a contract."

Dorothea and Roger's well-staffed home on East Seventieth Street became an extension of the office, a place to feed and amuse writers. Straus's son says that one of his first memories is seeing Charles R. Jackson, the author of "The Lost Weekend," throw up in his bathroom. Dorothea Straus was "certainly the intellectual of the family," Roger Straus III says—she was the one talking to Edmund Wilson about Tolstoy—but "both were very good at making a person feel good." They provided "a whole package that was just flawless." Wilson once wrote in his journal, after meeting with Straus, "I had been feeling hungover and rather morose, but as usual he made me laugh and cheered me up."

Before Farrar, Straus & Co. became one of America's finest literary publishing houses it was an ordinary American publishing house. The first book the company put out was "Yank: The G.I. Story of the War," a collection of articles taken from the Army magazine *Yank*, but Straus likes to say that it was "There Were Two Pirates," by the fantasy writer James Branch Cabell, and to quote from a review identifying three pirates: "the man who wrote it and Farrar and Straus who charged $3 for it." The early lists mixed mid-market fiction and nonfiction titles (historical novels, Eisenhower's speeches) with books aimed at a mass market, such as "Cooking by the Clock" and "Why Are You Single?" In an introduction to the company's first catalogue, in the fall of 1946, Straus and Farrar wrote, "Our list will be a general one, its titles selected with the wish that they will entertain, inform, stimulate. We shall shun neither the realistic nor the romantic." One gets a sense of the list from reading the trade-press advertisements of the time, which promised "a bold and bawdy novel of Victorian London"; "delightful, racy memories of a man who has done *almost* everything"; and a story of "big game hunting in primitive forest and veldt."

"Roger started with nothing, and when you start with nothing you publish what you can get," Galassi told me. There was, however, room to exercise commercial judgment, to show what Peter Mayer, the former C.E.O. of the Penguin Group, who now runs Overlook Press, calls Straus's great "merchant sensibility: it has to do with instinct for what you publish, some style or attack in the way you publish it. It's understanding what people will want to read now and next year, or maybe only next year." And in 1949, in a crucial move, Straus landed a new book by Gayelord Hauser—a tanned, faddish dietitian admired by Greta Garbo. "Look Younger, Live Longer" argued that modern toilet seats were built too high, and made extreme claims for the healing properties of yogurt and blackstrap molasses—so extreme that the F.D.A. said that the benefits were being "grossly misrepresented," and seized copies from a health-food store in Rochester, New York. The book was a best-seller in 1950 and sold three hundred thousand copies in its first year, guaranteeing the survival of Farrar, Straus. "It was like coining your own money," Straus remembers.

Straus was never embarrassed by this or any other commercial success, although from the start he hoped to see serious writing on the Farrar, Straus list. To trade in an elevated market would satisfy his sense of what a publisher should be; he always wanted, he said, to be "a proper, important, medium-sized literary publisher." But he grew increasingly alert to the financial sense of running "a successful trade publishing house that at least looks to be very literary, even though it sometimes has to pay the bills with something that's less than literary." "Roger took advantage of the opportunities that came his way," Galassi said. "And in a way literature was his biggest opportunity." A literary house can keep costs low—nobody expects spectacular salaries or advances—and it has an edge when wooing authors, including those who are not winning National Book Awards but who like to be seen in refined company. (Mid-market authors can be snobbish, to use Straus's own word.) In his personal life, Straus usually showed the kind of well-heeled thriftiness known to shivering guests in English country houses; except for his wardrobe, he spends money on himself reluctantly. In his commercial life, Straus began feeling his way toward a business philosophy that the novelist Rick Moody, a former F.S.G. associate editor, described to me, approvingly, as "pay modestly and keep it in print until the end of time." The publisher's loyalty (and charm) would be the compensation for frugality. As Roger Straus III puts it, "If you're an author and have an editor who's interested in your work, you think, My God, I've died and gone to Heaven. But to have a publisher who's interested in your work—and a publisher who also owns the goddam place—that's an aphrodisiac the like of which authors don't come by very often."

It was hard, early on, to persuade people in the industry to consider F.S.G. a literary publisher. Straus remembers having lunch at a French restaurant with Diarmuid Russell and Henry Volkening, then New York's leading literary agents, in the hope of making a play for some of their authors. The agents said, politely, "Why would we send you a book that we could send to Scribner's, Harcourt, or Knopf?" Straus saw their point. "I thought, What the hell can I do? I thought, Well, I'll go abroad to look."

Like a G.I. carrying chewing gum, Farrar, Straus could cut a greater dash in Europe than at home. Straus travelled to Italy, where, looking for a good book, he found a classic—"Christ Stopped at Eboli," Carlo Levi's memoir of political exile in the Italian south in the mid-thirties. Published in translation by the company in 1947, it was Farrar, Straus's first upscale success, and today it is in its thirty-first printing.

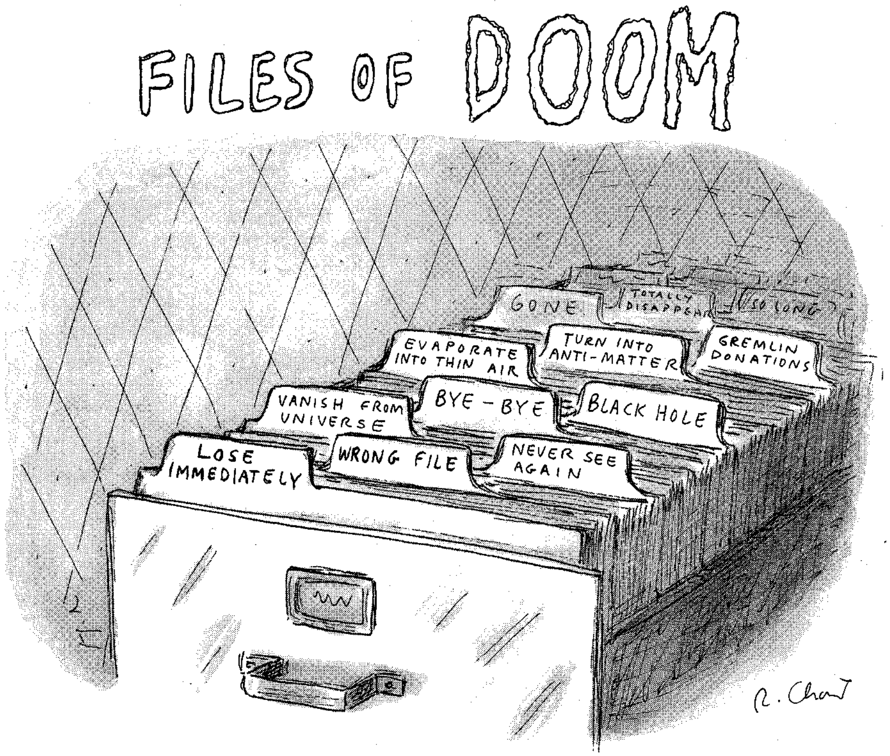
When we spoke recently, Straus revealed, for the first time in public, another reason for the company's early ties to European literature. At some point during his first year or two of business, he told me, he received a visit from a man who "flashed his credentials" and announced that he worked for United States intelligence. (Straus is reluctant to name the agency.) Appealing to Straus's patriotism, the man asked if Farrar, Straus could provide cover for two men in Europe. They would do real work for Straus as literary scouts, but they would also be reporting to this government agency, which would pay their salaries.

"I thought it was my patriotic duty to say yes," Straus told me. "But I also thought, from a businessman's point of view, Here we are starting this company—I'll have two guys in two different countries where I want entrée, who will do what I'll tell them to do and bring stuff in."

Straus (who has always been a fan of spy fiction) agreed to the plan. A dedicated telephone line was put into his office for calls to and from his contact. Straus "appointed" the two men—he had not met them—and they went to work for both bosses. Straus never knew exactly what information they were able to provide their paymasters, but he thinks it was "pretty thin soup." For his part, Straus got literature. One of the two men was based in Italy, and turned out to be very valuable. "I'd say to him, 'Go talk to Alberto Moravia and tell me when his new book will be ready.' Or, 'Talk to Moravia's publisher. Find out what's going on.' Or Carlo Levi, or Cesare Pavese." Straus and his Italian scout, who has since died, eventually met and became friends, although neither ever referred explicitly to the secret they both knew. According to Straus, no one else in the office knew of the arrangement, and there was no interference by United States intelligence in his day-to-day business. "They never asked me to do anything that was embarrassing. . . . They never said to me, 'Will you please pass some money from Sam to Jane?,' or 'Would you please call up So-and-So and arrange an appointment?' "

Given what's known about the C.I.A.'s funding of the magazine *Encounter*, for example, few people would be surprised to learn of another Cold War contact between American intelligence and an American cultural body. But one could imagine that Carlo Levi, a senator elected on the Communist Party ticket in the nineteen-sixties and seventies, would have been unhappy about the connection, had he known. Straus disagrees. "I knew him so well—he would have laughed. 'These dumb Americans! They think of all kinds of stuff.' "

The two agents worked for Farrar,



Straus for about ten years, into the mid-fifties. Straus then divorced himself from all contact with American intelligence, although for a while he kept the extra telephone, because "it was sort of nice to have it there." In the early nineteen-seventies, the agency made one more approach. "I said, 'Go fuck yourself. I'm finished. I'm not playing anymore,'" Straus told me. " 'Oh, no, no—one last thing you have to do.' I said, 'What is it?' He said, 'We want to see the manuscript of "August 1914," by Solzhenitsyn.' I said, 'You go fuck yourself.' I said, 'When galley proofs are ready, I'll send you a set.' 'No, we want it before that.' I said, 'Doesn't anybody speak Russian there anymore?' He said, 'What are you talking about?' I said, 'Well, you go to Brentano's, you can buy the book in Russian.' Ha! That was my last intercourse with them."

I visited Straus a few weeks ago in his office on Union Square. The experience was like opening a door at M-G-M and finding Louis B. Mayer still at work. He had just had a meeting with Jonathan Galassi, in which they had talked about a young American fiction writer being courted by New York publishers. "Jonathan sat down with me and said, 'How much do you think we should pay her?' I said, 'As little as possible, because what do we know?' And he said, 'What do you think about my going to fifty?' And I said, 'Well, if I say yes to fifty you'll go to sixty. Beyond that we don't go.' " He laughed.

The junior and senior colleagues seem to enjoy playing up their temperamental differences: Galassi, who has the air of an upbeat Egyptologist about to run into trouble in a black-and-white horror movie, is the bookish straight man to Straus's comic faux philistine. Galassi is a poet and a translator as well as a shrewd publisher. "Roger is sort of a father figure to me," Galassi, who is fifty-two, said. "And those relationships have tensions, but basically I love him." Surprisingly, Straus is the more prudish man when it comes to sexual content. "He takes exception to books that he considers—how would I say it?—dirty," Galassi says. Straus accepted the point when I asked him about it. "I know the book he had in mind; I refused to publish it, and then Sonny Mehta"—the head of Alfred A. Knopf—"published it immediately. What's his name? He wrote that fucking . . . Bret Ellis." "American Psycho"? "I wouldn't publish it!"

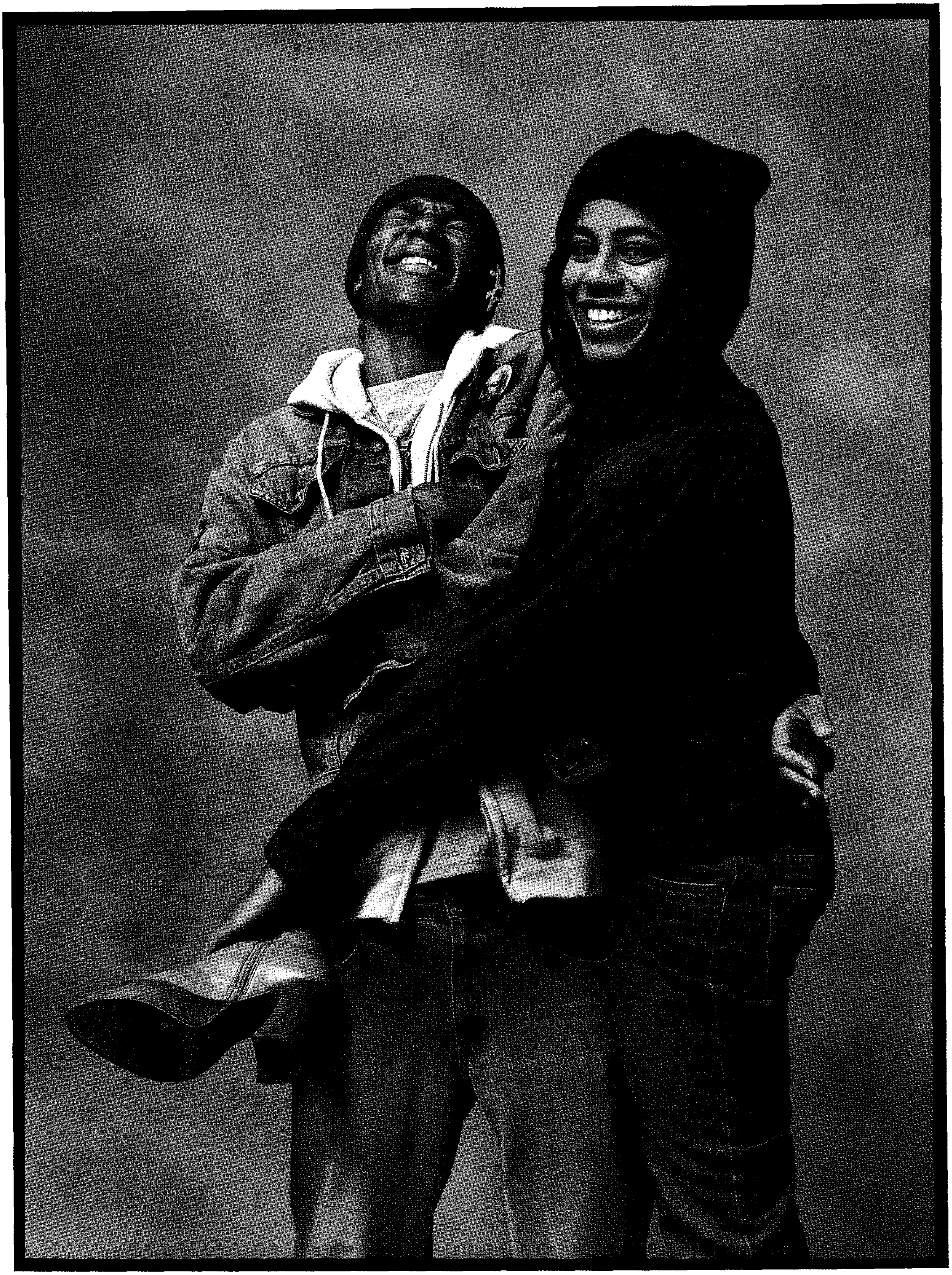
Straus still goes into the office four days a week, attends the weekly editorial meetings, and reads everything. "He's involved in every decision of importance," Galassi says. "I don't have to get his approval to sign up a book, but I tell him about everything we're doing, and I consult him on every major deal." Straus says he still thrives on moments of discovery. "That's why you get up in the morning with a bounce in your feet. You've discovered a new author who you think is absolutely marvellous. . . . It's very sexy. It feels great. It's a triumph. It's 'Christ, we did something, we found something.' "

By the fifties, Farrar, Straus had acquired a literary character, publishing Levi, Moravia, and Edmund Wilson, as well as Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" and Marguerite Yourcenar's "Memoirs of Hadrian": "a hell of a book, and we paid nothing for it," Straus says, neatly summarizing his business philosophy. During this time, the company changed its name twice: first, in 1950, to Farrar, Straus & Young (Stanley Young was a critic and playwright, and an original stockholder); then, in 1953, when Young stepped down, to Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. Sheila Cudahy, a friend of the Strauses', had run the Chicago firm Pellegrini & Cudahy with her husband, George Pellegrini. After he died, she sold the company to Farrar and Straus: they gained access to many of her authors, including Marguerite Duras and François Mauriac, and to the children's imprint Ariel Books. (Children's writing became one of the strengths of the Farrar, Straus list, particularly after the firm bought L. C. Page & Company, in 1957. Today, children's books account for about a third of all F.S.G. sales.)

But the key event of the period—Straus has called it "the single most important thing to happen to this company"—was the arrival, in 1955, of Robert Giroux, as editor-in-chief. At the time, Giroux ran Harcourt Brace's trade division, where he had edited T. S. Eliot. He had recently become riled by his employers' refusal to let him publish "The Catcher in the Rye." "I was really boiling with rage," Giroux recalls. Straus, along with Farrar and Cudahy, took him out to lunch, and Giroux, seeing the opportunity to help shape an unformed house owned by a young enthusiast, agreed to join them. "People thought I was crazy," Giroux said. " 'It's a new firm, they're not solid, they're not established.' " To Giroux's amazement, Eliot told Harcourt Brace that he would offer his next book to Farrar, Straus. "That was the greatest thing that happened to me in my career in publishing," Giroux said. "That a great poet thought so highly of me. . . . I was absolutely unprepared for that." Over the next few years, sixteen other writers made the same move, including John Berryman, Robert Lowell, Jean Stafford, Elizabeth Bishop, Flannery O'Connor, and Bernard Malamud. Whatever Straus may or may not have known about the world of letters, "he knew enough to know he needed a Bob," Jonathan Galassi says.

Photographs of Straus and Giroux were once published next to each other in *Time*, with the captions "Giroux: inside man" and "Straus: outspoken." Straus was talkative and determinedly vulgar; Giroux, who is three years older than Straus, and who is now mostly retired, was quiet, wiry, and serious. (Jack Kerouac's mother once said to Giroux, "You don't look like a publisher." "Well, what do I look like?" "A banker.") Each valued the other, and they sometimes socialized together; Giroux remembers the Strauses joining him and Eliot at the opening night of "My Fair Lady." But they never forged a strong personal alliance. Giroux speaks admiringly of Straus's publishing flair, but says he grew to detect something faintly grudging in Straus's manner, a lack of enthusiasm for successes not directly attributable to him. "When I won the Bobst Award, in 1988"—it recognizes achievement in arts and letters—"I think he felt he should have got it before me," Giroux told me.

Straus says that Giroux was clever and well read. "He was one of the great nurses of all time. Malamud, Lowell, and Berryman—he was able to handle these people, and they respected him, and they could talk to him." But Straus was sometimes frustrated by what he regarded as Giroux's business naïveté. "I once said to him, 'The trouble with you,



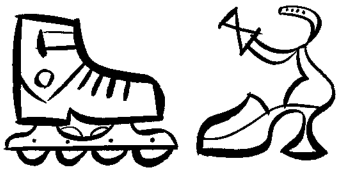
SHOWCASE BY ALEXEI HAY *Suzan-Lori Parks with Mos Def, the rapper and actor who is a would-be three-card-monte hustler in Parks's two-man play "Topdog/Underdog," opening on Broadway this week.*

Giroux, is that you’ve been in publishing a hundred and seven years and you still don’t know the difference between an editor and a publisher!’ ” He adds, “Bob never had much personality, but they”—his authors—“didn’t need him to.”

Straus’s impatience with Giroux is typical of his combative manner; he likes to balance admiration with disregard. But one wonders if in this case Straus betrays a hint of intellectual insecurity—a jock’s self-consciousness about his poetic roommate. Straus’s judgments shaped the company: he owned the house, bought up smaller companies, hired the editors, read the manuscripts, and ran the meetings. No one has ever accused him of having low literary taste. But as Straus’s friend Matthew Evans (now Lord Evans), the publisher of Faber & Faber in London, says, “I think Roger’s quite overawed by the literary world.” He puts himself and his old friend in “that group of publishers who know their list very well but don’t revel in the wider world of literature.” Straus and his authors have an intimacy that is rooted in gossip, business, mockery, and self-mockery, and perhaps his conversational style (the “cocksucker”s and “shit”s, the indiscretion) grew out of a desire to compete in bookish company—a preëmptive strike in any battle of wits.

Authors follow editors to new publishing houses, and authors also follow authors. “It’s like a gynecologist,” Straus explains. “ ‘I had a very good experience with Dr. Schmuck, *you* ought to go to Dr. Schmuck.’ ” After Giroux’s appointment, the Farrar, Straus lists were no longer led by “What Today’s Woman Should Know About Marriage” (1948) or “The Reader’s Digest Murder Case” (1952) but by books such as “The Diary of ‘Helena Morley,’ ” by Elizabeth Bishop (1958). And although the company continued to publish Gayelord Hauser—the archives show Straus patiently pressing him for more dietary material, year after year—it began to be better known as the publishers of Malamud, Colette, and Kerouac. (“On the Road,” however, slipped through Giroux’s fingers when he wondered in Kerouac’s hearing if the typescript, a single roll of paper, might need to be cut into pages for editing.) Susan Sontag’s first novel, “The Benefactor,” was published in 1963. Tom Wolfe and John McPhee—the “house eagle” and the “company mule,” respectively, according to McPhee—were both first published in 1965, shortly after the company became Farrar, Straus & Giroux. McPhee enlarged a *New Yorker* Profile of Bill Bradley into “A Sense of Where You Are,” and Wolfe collected his magazine articles into “The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby.” (Other publishers had wanted him to write a “real” book first.) “Roger is the kind of person I always expected to meet in New York when I came here, in 1962,” Wolfe says. “What you’d usually see is people in black raincoats and hats with two-inch bows scuttling along the sidewalks head down. But Roger was the New York that I hoped would be here. There are certain people whom I think of as motors. They get everybody else moving. I don’t consider myself one, but I consider Roger to be that kind of person.”

In the nineteen-sixties and seventies, as the company grew to become one of the great literary houses in New York, perhaps the greatest, it remained defined in part by its cheapness. The history of F.S.G. can be read as a long shrug accompanied by a patting of pockets. John McPhee remembers once asking Straus for an advance and getting the reply “Fuck you.” Advances were below market rates, and there was no hot water in the men’s room in the office, which, in 1961, had moved to Union Square—or Needle Park, as Straus could reasonably call it in those days. (In an appreciation of Straus written a few years ago, Wolfe described drug deals and assaults coming to a “momentary but deferential halt” each morning as Straus pulled up to the office in his Mercedes.) In 1962, Peggy Miller hesitated before taking a job with the company, because the office was “so disgusting.” Salaries were very low: a former staff member once said that Straus “assumed that Mummy was taking care of you. Your salary was pin money.” Another recently put it more harshly: “Snobby hierarchical institutions mistreat people.” One former F.S.G. author says, “Money isn’t a gentlemanly subject, and some writers got exploited.”



As a traditional independent publisher of hardback books, Straus derived much of his income from selling subsidiary rights, a standard industry practice that has only recently begun to give way to “vertical” publishing—that is, when a company publishes both the hardback and the paperback edition of a book. Straus would take on the initial financial risk, then sell paperback rights to a paperback house, and, if he had world rights, sell these to his publishing pals abroad. F.S.G. also kept a percentage of an author’s international royalties. To some, these arrangements seemed a little clubby and opaque. The publisher and its writers often had what the agent Andrew Wylie disapprovingly calls “a traditional French relationship”; French publishers tend to buy world rights and to offer the kind of business counsel that an agent offers an author. “I think that it’s a very comfortable situation for a publisher, but it’s less productive for a writer,” Wylie says.

Morgan Entrekin, the publisher of the independent firm Grove Atlantic, disagrees. “I built my business emulating people like Roger,” he says. In Entrekin’s view, modern conglomerate publishers are simply becoming financiers and distributors. “For a writer who’s very successful, it probably is to your advantage just to have a financier and distributor and take as much away from the table as you can. For a writer who’s trying to build a career, it’s more to his advantage to have a partnership.” Besides, Entrekin added, when he is selling international rights, “I am going to be a more effective salesman for that small book than a sub-agent who’s representing three or four hundred other titles. I am going to end up earning that author more money.”

In fact, a number of F.S.G. authors—including McPhee, Singer, and, later, Philip Roth—had no agent. McPhee has known Straus for thirty-seven years and is very close to him; they talk on the telephone most weeks. Speaking from Princeton, where he teaches nonfiction writing, McPhee recalled asking

Straus how much money he was losing by not having his own representation, and Straus said, "Oh, not a whole hell of a lot." McPhee laughed. His most recent book contract was agreed to one afternoon in his office, during a conversation that involved just the author and the publisher. To any agent, this would seem a scandalously inappropriate scene. (Andrew Wylie's own approaches to McPhee have been unsuccessful. McPhee once jokingly agreed to be represented by him, with the stipulation that any deal had to be acceptable to Straus.) But McPhee says that the advantage of the existing arrangement "is that all of my books are in print in hardcover and paperback. All of them." (There are twenty-six.) "And that wouldn't be true if a vigorous agent were running around finding out where he could get more money, and you were jumping publishers," McPhee noted. "And that means more to me than anything else, and if he's screwing me out of money he can have it."

"I think we overordered."

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In 1960, Knopf merged with Random House, marking the start of a period of great corporate convulsions in American publishing. By 1972, when John Farrar retired after many years of ill health, Straus was increasingly defining the company in opposition to conglomerate publishing. Although F.S.G. had built its own small empire through the acquisition, in 1960, of Noonday Press, a paperback company, and in 1971, of Hill & Wang, an academic publisher, Straus became the spokesman of independent ways. He resigned from the Association of American Publishers in the late seventies, to protest its allegedly accommodating response to mergers. At the same time, Straus and Dick Snyder, who was then the C.E.O. of Simon & Schuster, disagreed rancorously in the press about the integrity of corporate publishing, in a public display that became what one editor calls a "violent cartoon" enjoyed by New York's publishing community.

More than other publishers, Farrar, Straus was driven by pure editorial considerations—by an editor's insistent brandishing of a new manuscript—rather than by the projection of future sales. The house kept faith in unprofitable writers. Its books were beautifully made. It was the first publisher to offer royalties on remaindered books. Joseph Brodsky, who affectionately called Straus "Boss," once said, "Other publishers could be compared to factories. F.S.G. isn't a publishing house; it is an extension of my home." The editors did not lean on writers. "If I was slow getting a book done, they never pestered me," Wolfe says. "It was always such a personal and non-bureaucratic relationship." McPhee talks about "an incredible attention to detail. And they share that with the author." Straus offered a devotion that seemed related to his company's independent ownership. "Their power of selling books is not as great as some others," Isaac Singer said in the late nineteen-seventies. "But I am selling books. They treat me well, and if I have to ask a question I can call up the big boss. I don't have to guess who the owner is."

In return, authors often acted as readers for the company. To give one unprofitable example, around 1980 Straus asked Susan Sontag to read two novels. One was "The Day of Judgment," by Salvatore Satta; the other was "The Name of the Rose," by Umberto Eco. "I said, 'Baby, read these two fucking books and tell me what you think,' " Straus told me. "She read them and said, 'You should buy both of them.' I said, 'Come on, how many Wops can I publish?' I said, 'Which is the best?' She said, 'They're both very good.' I said, 'Come on, which is the best?' She said, 'I love the Satta, a lot,' so I bought the Satta, and turned down the Eco. And Satta sold two thousand copies. Ha!" "The Name of the Rose," which was published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, sold fifty million copies worldwide. "Eco knows the story. He kids me about it."

Isaac Bashevis Singer won the Nobel Prize in 1978. Nine other F.S.G. authors became Nobel laureates over the next seventeen years: Czeslaw Milosz, Elias Canetti, William Golding, Wole Soyinka, Joseph Brodsky, Camilo José Cela, Nadine Gordimer, Derek Walcott, and Seamus Heaney. F.S.G. also had the rights to ten earlier laureates, including Eliot and Hermann Hesse. The running joke was that Straus reserved a suite each December in Stockholm. "He gives a fake groan and says, 'Oh, my God, I have to go to Stockholm again,' " Derek Walcott told me.

By the mid-eighties, F.S.G. had also won fifteen National Book Awards and six Pulitzer Prizes. And in 1987 there was a moment of almost embarrassing commercial success. Jonathan Galassi, who had joined the firm the previous year after being fired by Random House, immediately shook his reputation as a "five-thousand editor" (that is, an editor of books that sold only five thousand copies) by helping persuade Scott Turow to take two hundred thousand dollars from F.S.G. for his legal thriller "Presumed Innocent," rather than another company's three hundred and fifty thousand. "Farrar, Straus had published more of the books I admired than any other publishing house," Turow says. His book was a hardcover best-seller for eleven months. "Bonfire of the Vanities" was published later the same year. The company briefly became what Straus called "nouveau riche." As Turow recalls, "Jonathan would call me up and say, 'There's another reprinting; think of it as three new poets we can publish.' I remember him calling to say, 'We now have health insurance and a profit-sharing scheme for our employees.' " The office was repainted.

But publishing was changing. "Big fish were eating small fish and bigger fish eating the big fish," as Straus puts it. In 1975, Simon & Schuster was bought by Gulf & Western, which became Paramount and was then bought by Viacom. In 1987, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation bought Harper & Row (now HarperCollins). Companies with rich corporate parents could afford to hook a trophy author with an advance far in excess of the book's expected earnings. The gap was widening between advances and earnings, and between the relative spending power of the conglomerates and the independents. Authors had been willing to make a financial sacrifice to be published, lovingly, by F.S.G., but that sacrifice was becoming greater. Roger Straus III, who became F.S.G.'s managing director in the mid-eighties after working at Harper & Row and Avon, remembers a dark moment of realization when Oscar Hijuelos, the author of "The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love," left F.S.G. for HarperCollins. Hijuelos had been offered not just more money but "change-your-life money," as Straus III puts it.

During this period, agents appeared where there had been no agents. The business was becoming mano a mano a mano. At a cocktail party at Straus's home in the late eighties, Andrew Wylie introduced himself to Philip Roth, who became a Wylie client soon afterward. "I'd been paying him a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a book for world rights," Roger Straus says. "Wylie said, 'You can have him for nine hundred thousand dollars for a three-book contract for the U.S. only,' and I said, 'Fuck off,' and he went to Simon & Schuster."

Straus was offended, and he and Roth still do not speak, although he has made up with Wylie. "I'll tell you the truth about Wylie," Straus said recently. "Wylie's a shit, but he's very bright, and he's really the most intelligent of all the agents. He's well read, he has good taste, he's smart, and he's venal—all these things—and he's made himself indispensable to people like Rushdie, Philip Roth. He's read their work and understands them and can talk to them."

"He said I'm a shit?" Wylie asked shortly afterward. He thought for a moment. "I am a shit. Well, he's got that right." He, in turn, described Straus as "one of the people who matter. . . . I think there are people who are interested in literature, and Roger is definitely one of them." But Wylie also called Straus a bully, and told me that he has "a terrible temper." Wylie laughed. "I'm always happy to talk to Roger, but occasionally he's not happy to talk to me."

In 1989, Straus was persuaded to arrange, in partnership with Bantam, a seven-million-dollar book deal for Tom Wolfe. (As Wolfe says, "That was a very big amount of money for them. It was a big leap.") But this was an exception. Straus's scorn for publishing's new methods, while it attracted a certain kind of author seeking civilized refuge from the conglomerates and made the company's cheapness look like a literary virtue, risked putting F.S.G. out of the running for other authors. Negotiations stalled over Straus's old-publishing appetite for subsidiary rights and over fundamental differences between agents and Straus about an author's ultimate value. Wylie argues that Philip Roth, for example, "is as valuable as can be, and I think he could reasonably ask to be paid almost anything he could get at any time for anything he writes. He's as good as they come. So, you know, if someone's going to nickel-and-dime, then . . . Well, Roger wouldn't say he was nickel-and-diming, he was thousanding and ten-thousanding, but it comes down to nickels and dimes, in my opinion."

Roth's departure, in 1989, marked the beginning of a turbulent period. In 1990, F.S.G. overestimated the demand for Scott Turow's novel "The Burden of Proof," and printed approximately a hundred and fifty thousand too many copies. It was also a time of recession, and the firm had to contract; there were pay cuts and layoffs. Relations between Straus and Giroux grew strained as Jonathan Galassi became more powerful in the company. In 1993, Roger Straus III left F.S.G. A press release referred to "philosophical differences" between father and

R.J.
Leo Cullum

"Actually, there were a number of messages while you were in prison."

son. That phrase hid a painful generational fracture, caused in part by disagreements about how much to build on the mass-market success of Turow. (Straus III wanted to take the company further into these markets; Straus is said to have undermined his son in editorial meetings.) But there was no door-slamming, and there seems to have been no lasting feud. "This was not World War Three," Turow, who was friendly with both men, says. "Although it broke my heart."

"Ultimately, there was only one vote," Roger Straus III says. "There always had been, and always would be, and as long as I was comfortable with that it was fine, and, to the degree that I wasn't, there was going to be a problem." His father says, "I was sad, because I liked the idea of being able to hand the company over to him. My wife and I used to talk about that."

For thirty years, F.S.G. had been regularly courted by larger firms, including Disney and Random House, and Straus had remained proudly and loudly unbought. But one day in 1994 Straus took his son to lunch and said, "I'm going to do it." The decision to sell may have been precipitated by Roger Straus III's departure, but both men think that new publishing conditions made a sale inevitable. Straus had to take care of his authors, his employees, and between thirty and forty outside stockholders. (Straus owned fifty-one per cent of the stock.) The company had to be able to bid in big auctions, and to have direct access to a paperback house.

At lunch, his son said, "Is that the right thing for you?" and Straus replied, "I guess so." He was at that moment a little more reflective than usual, if not exactly wistful. "He doesn't spend a lot of time wallowing in the past," his son told me. "But I think he wishes things had stayed the same. I don't think he particularly likes a world where money is so clearly king, and the most important component in a relationship between author and publisher is money." Straus made one phone call, to his friend Dieter von Holtzbrinck, who was then the chairman of the media company founded by Georg von Holtzbrinck, his father, in 1934. The company was still in family ownership, and Straus knew it would treat him with some respect. "Do you want to play?" Straus asked on the telephone. Von Holtzbrinck replied, "Tell me how much you want for the company and I'll write you a check." Straus sold for an amount his son puts at "north of thirty million dollars." Announcing the sale, in November of 1994, Straus said, "Nothing will be changed. Everything will remain the same."

Three or four times a week for sixteen years, Roger Straus has had lunch at the Union Square Café. If, by noon, Straus has not called to make a reservation, the restaurant will call Straus. "It's his table until he tells us otherwise," Danny Meyer, the restaurant's co-owner, explained to me. If a new host at the restaurant asks Straus what time he plans to arrive, he will say, pleasantly, "What time do you expect? Lunchtime." At lunchtime, Straus walks around the corner from the office, in ascot and cufflinks, accompanied by an author or an agent or a publisher, and perhaps Peggy Miller, and they head for Table 38, in the back. On the way, Straus will acknowledge his fellow-regular Paul Gottlieb, from Harry N. Abrams, and then order a glass of port. "Roger is enormously consistent, incredibly loyal. He's a man of deep habits," Meyer said. (Straus calls to apologize when he eats at one of Meyer's other restaurants.)

Roger Straus's life is mostly unchanged by having become the choicest exhibit in a German corporate collection. He continues to spend the weekends at his house in Purchase, where he plays tennis at the Westchester Country Club, a few miles away. ("I just limp around," he says.) Nobody from Stuttgart bothers him. "It's the takeover that never happened," Straus's old friend Inge Feltrinelli says. Soon after Holtzbrinck bought the British publishers Macmillan, in 1995, that company's editor-in-chief, Peter Straus, picked up the phone to hear Roger Straus growl, "We're still not fucking related."

After a lifetime making a connection between independent ownership and sound publishing values, Straus has redefined "independence" as a state of mind rather than a state of ownership. Although there may be fewer people today than twenty years ago who would put F.S.G. first among American literary publishing houses, Straus's authors have kept faith in him, and in return he is still vigorous in their defense. (Two years ago, Straus tried to persuade the editor-in-chief of W.W. Norton, Starling Lawrence, who was also an F.S.G. fiction writer, to abandon Norton's biography of Susan Sontag. "Kill the fucker," he said on the telephone. When Lawrence did not kill it, Straus cancelled the contract for Lawrence's new novel. Lawrence was furious, and thinks that Straus "has become a parody or caricature of what he was.")

"When you are seen as the *patron*, you can get away with murder, in a way," Peter Mayer, the publisher of Overlook Press, says. "Things are permitted to *patrons* that are not permitted to C.E.O.s. A C.E.O. can always be replaced, and a *patron* cannot." In appointing Galassi president and publisher of the company, Straus has even been effectively allowed to name his successor. It has crossed Straus's mind that the company name could reflect Galassi's rise without great upheaval, and without changing the Web-site address. "I'd like it if it was Farrar, Straus & Galassi, but I'm not going to shoot Giroux," Straus told me.

Thanks to the new financial backing from Stuttgart, Straus can bid in the big book auctions that he used to mock, even if most of his authors are still waiting for their German windfall. Andrew Wylie says, "I expected Roger—I shouldn't say this, but it's true—I expected Roger to become a little less cheap after Holtzbrinck acquired Farrar, Straus. Quite the opposite." When I met Straus in his office in New York, he had recently approved, with some distress, an offer of $1.25 million on a first novel represented by the agent Lynn Nesbit; it was a "crazy price," Straus said, with a what-can-you-do shrug. The bid had failed. "We got a telephone call from Little Ms. Nesbit, saying, 'Oops, the whole deal is off, I've taken a preëmptive bid of four million dollars for a two-book contract for this guy.' I said to my editor, 'This guy has got no more idea what the next book is going to be than I have.' I said, 'What is the next book?' 'Well, a sequel of some kind.' "

Straus laughed. He seemed pleased that he had been able to bid, and also pleased to have lost the auction. ♦

ANNALS OF MEDICINE

A KNIFE IN THE BACK

Is surgery the best approach to chronic back pain?

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

Surgeons have often touted procedures that ultimately proved to be disappointing. In the nineteen-fifties, many patients with angina and coronary-artery disease had an operation that involved tying off an artery that runs under the sternum. The idea was that it would increase the flow of blood to a heart that was being starved of its normal supply. Then, at the end of the decade, a clinical trial demonstrated that patients who underwent a sham operation did just as well as those who had the real one; the placebo effect apparently accounted for the fact that so many patients felt better afterward.

The radical mastectomy, pioneered a century ago, used to be routinely performed, too. Physicians believed that breast cancer spread in a contiguous, stepwise fashion from the primary tumor, and that the only way to eradicate the disease was to remove the entire breast and the underlying muscles. By the nineteen-eighties, it had become clear that tumor cells could spread throughout the body early in the disease, through lymph channels and blood vessels. A lumpectomy, followed by local radiation, proved as effective as a radical mastectomy in treating the cancer, and was far less traumatic to the patient.

Last year, approximately a hundred and fifty thousand lower-lumbar spinal fusions were performed in the United States. The operation, which involves removing lumbar disks and mechanically bracing the vertebrae, is of tremendous benefit to patients with fractured spines or spinal cancers; more frequently, however, it is performed to alleviate chronic lower-back pain. But how effective is it? That's a question that many of the doctors who perform the fusions, and the insurers who pay for them, appear reluctant to ask.

Roughly two-thirds of all Americans will experience significant lower-back pain at least once during their lives; some will also have sciatica, a pain that follows the nerve running from the lower back down the leg. In the United States, current estimates of the cost of medical care for those who have been disabled by severe back pain range from thirty to seventy billion dollars annually. Back pain is most likely to occur between the ages of forty-five and sixty-four, and, over all, nearly one in four Americans claims to suffer chronically from the problem. Many of these people are being told that fusion surgery is the solution.

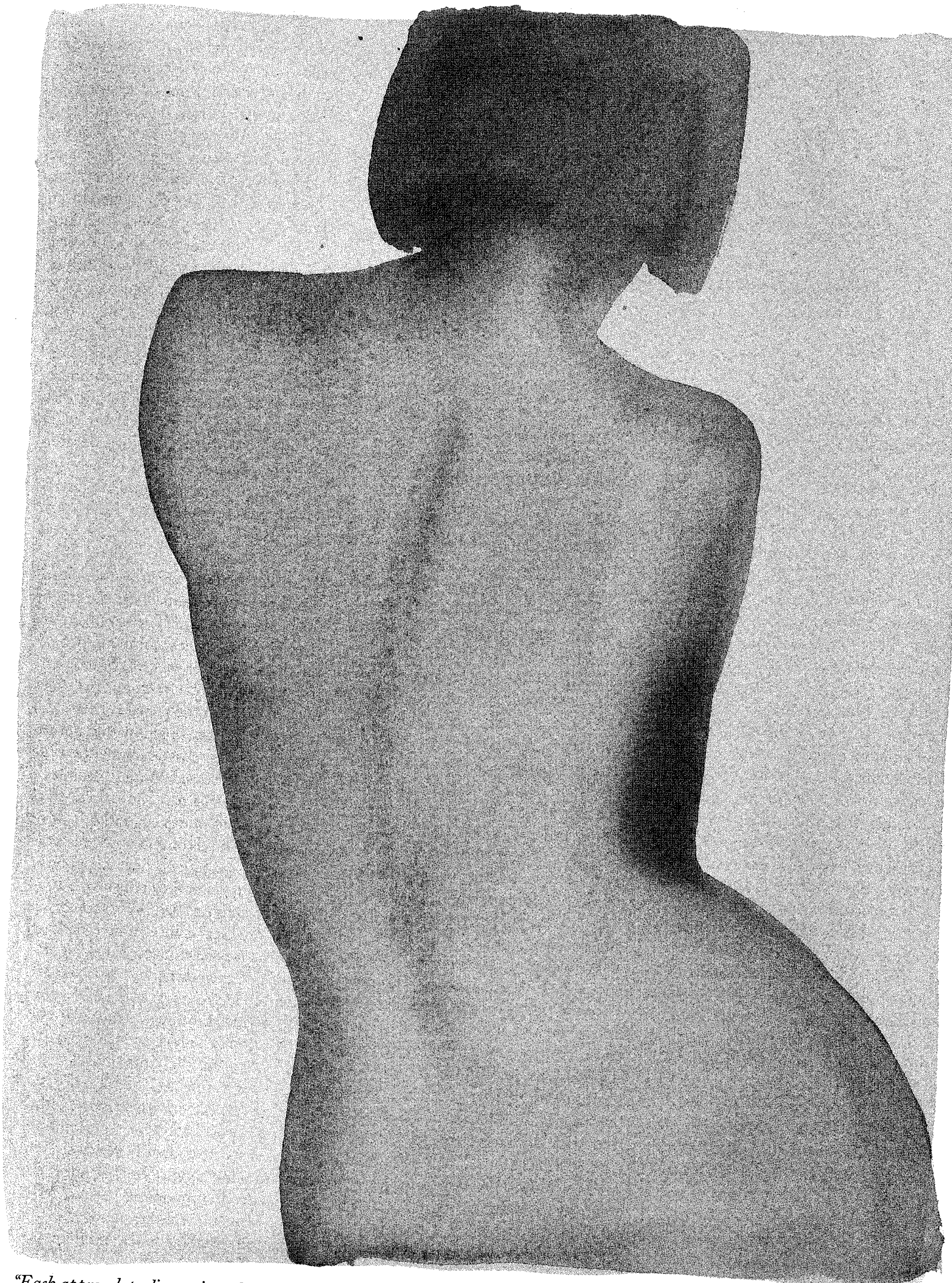
Trisha Bryant (her name has been changed) is a former marketing executive in her mid-thirties. Two years ago, while working in a home-furnishings store, she helped a floor manager move some inventory and developed sciatica in her right leg. She continued to work but the pain persisted, and she eventually went to the emergency room for an MRI scan, which showed a small rupture of the disk below the fifth lumbar vertebra. Disks—the spine's shock absorbers—are sheathed in a fibrous casing called the annulus, which protects their gelatinous core, and when a disk ruptures bits of it break through the casing. The MRI scan showed that the protruding edge of Trisha's ruptured disk was just touching the right nerve root as it exited the spine. It also showed some narrowing of the disk immediately above—an early sign of the wear and tear of aging, or "degeneration."

Trisha was given Percocet and told to stop working. For several months, she also received epidural steroid injections, but her discomfort persisted. About nine months after Trisha injured herself, an orthopedic surgeon performed a relatively simple procedure called a discectomy, in which a fragment of the ruptured disk is removed. For more than three-quarters of patients with sciatica who undergo discectomy, the procedure helps relieve pain. Trisha's sciatica went away, but the pain in her lower back increased. Another MRI showed that the disk the surgeon had operated on was protruding again, this time toward both the right and the left nerve roots. The surgeon told Trisha that the next step would be to fuse her lower spine, which had become "unstable." He planned to remove the degenerated disk or disks that were causing the pain and mechanically brace the spine with metal rods and bone grafts. First, however, he wanted Trisha to undergo discography, a procedure that was supposed to determine how much of her pain was coming from the lower protruding disk and how much from the upper, narrowed one. This information would help him decide whether one or two disks should be removed.

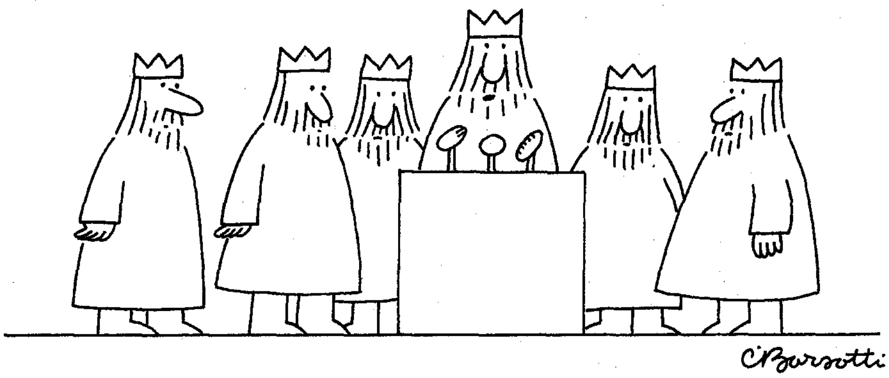
Trisha Bryant assumed that the procedures her surgeon recommended were necessary and had been validated by research. I, too, made that assumption when I suffered from recurrent lower-back pain twenty years ago and elected to have a fusion. If Trisha had explored the medical literature, however, she would have discovered that every aspect of her case—the interpretation of her MRI scan, the diagnosis of spinal instability, the rationale for fusing vertebrae, the impending discography—was controversial among spine specialists. Indeed, many doctors might recommend that she avoid any further surgery.

For the discography, which was performed at a Boston hospital, Trisha was asked to lie on a long metal table with her lower back exposed. A radiologist trained in the technique explained that he would be applying increasing amounts of pressure to her disks, and that Trisha should try to discern whether the pain she felt during the procedure was "familiar," or "different" from her current symptoms. Then he administered some anesthetic just under the skin and inserted a needle called a trocar into

MATS GUSTAFSON



"Each approach to diagnosis and treatment is essentially a franchise, and there are too many franchises battling," one doctor says.



"Good question. Yes, we have your best interests at heart."

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Trisha's lower back. Following his progress on a fluoroscope monitor, he slowly advanced the trocar until it reached the edge of the disk above the ruptured one. He then inserted a fine-gauge needle into the trocar and pushed it into the disk itself. Trisha gasped. "There are lots of nerve fibres in the annulus," the doctor said. "I'm sorry."

He took an instrument resembling a huge syringe which was attached to a digital monitor, fastened it to the fine-gauge needle, and began to press on the plunger. "Now, tell me if you feel any pain," he said, "and whether the pain you are feeling is the familiar pain that you are suffering from." If Trisha did not feel her familiar pain, this disk would serve as a control. A series of red neon digits raced across the monitor—20, 25, 28, then 30—representing the pounds per square inch of pressure that he was applying within the disk; Trisha squirmed with each new increment. At 100, the doctor withdrew the trocar, while the technician recorded her reaction.

The doctor then repeated the procedure an inch or so down Trisha's spine, on the adjacent disk that was protruding. This time, when the pressure hit 30 on the monitor, Trisha cried, "Oh, God! Oh, God!"

"Is that your familiar pain?" the doctor asked. Trisha said that the pain was viselike, and that she also felt a few electric shocks in her buttocks and her thighs. At 40, Trisha, sobbing, said it was familiar pain.

"It's over," the doctor said. He told Trisha that she had done very well.

This radiologist performs discography three hundred times a year. He says that it is his least enjoyable procedure, because patients are intentionally subjected to pain. More troubling, however, is the fact that the results it provides may be dangerously misleading.

Much of the recent research into the limitations of discography as a diagnostic tool was done by Dr. Eugene Carragee, the director of Stanford's Orthopedic Spine Center, who has received four national prizes in recognition of his work. One study was an assessment of patients who, like Trisha Bryant, underwent discography after having had some form of back surgery. He found that forty per cent of patients who had no back pain after surgery still experienced significant pain during discography; on the other hand, nearly forty per cent of those with persistent back pain after surgery reported no pain during the procedure. In other words, there was no meaningful correlation between pain suffered after surgery and pain suffered during discography.

A related study examined the responses of patients during discography who had other kinds of aches and pains; some of them had somatization disorder, a psychological condition that expresses itself in physical symptoms. Eighty-three per cent of those with somatization disorder experienced significant pain during the procedure. In general, Carragee found that patients who suffered from depression or anxiety were more likely to find discography painful, and some reported lower-back pain for at least a year afterward. For these patients, not only did discography fail to provide clinically useful data but it risked causing long-term pain as well.

CT and MRI scans, which usually precede discography, are often used to make the case for surgery, but the correlation between damaged or degenerated disks and lower-back pain is far from conclusive. A recent study of CT scans showed that twenty-seven per cent of healthy people over the age of forty had a herniated disk, ten per cent had an abnormality of the vertebral facet joints, and fifty per cent had other anatomical changes that were judged significant. And yet none of these people had nagging back pain. Another study, using MRI scanning, showed that thirty-six per cent of people over sixty had a herniated disk, and some eighty to ninety per cent of them had significant disk degeneration in the form of narrowing or bulging. Given that degenerated disks are often found in people who are fully functioning, it shouldn't be assumed that they are always the cause of the trouble.

If disks aren't necessarily the source of lower-back pain, where else might the pain come from? The various muscles, tendons, bones, joints, and ligaments of the lower back all contain sensory nerves that can transmit messages of pain through the spinal cord and up to the brain; so can organs within the abdomen and the pelvis when they become inflamed or diseased. With so many potential sources of pain, how do doctors arrive at an accurate diagnosis? It turns out that the kinds of diagnostic tests ordered for back patients depend upon the type of physician they consult. A 1994 research study entitled "Who You See Is What You Get" demonstrated that each group of specialists favored the diagnostic tools of their discipline. Neurologists ordered electromyograms (EMGs)—tests in which the integrity of the neural-conduction system is assessed by inserting electric needles into muscles and along nerve tracks. Rheumatologists, who are experts in arthritis and other joint disorders, ordered serologies—blood tests that identify relatively rare autoimmune conditions that affect the spine. And surgeons requested MRI scans, which reveal the anatomy of the disks and vertebral bones and may suggest a surgical solution.

"Each approach to diagnosis and

treatment is essentially a franchise, and there are too many franchises battling for control," says Dr. Seth Waldman, who is the chief of the Division of Pain Medicine at New York's Hospital for Special Surgery, a major referral center for bone and joint disorders. "In medicine, if you are able to stick a needle into a person, you are reimbursed at a much better rate by the insurance company. So there is a tremendous drive to perform invasive procedures." Discography is one of them. "At the hospital where I was a fellow training in 1993, discograms were rarely done," Waldman went on. "Over the last few years, they have come into vogue. Surgeons and others order them routinely."

In the end, however, about eighty-five per cent of patients who suffer from lower-back pain cannot be given a precise diagnosis. The pain is usually vaguely attributed to a "strain" or "sprain" in the lumbar region. Whatever the diagnosis, though, the outcomes tend to be similar. In a study that followed patients who consulted their doctors within three days of experiencing acute lower-back pain, ninety per cent improved within two to seven weeks, without specific therapy. Even patients with an acute ruptured disk have a good prognosis, although their recovery is usually slower: some ninety per cent will feel significantly better within six weeks, without surgery. Over time, the disk gradually retracts, so that it is no longer pressing on the nerves, and the inflammation subsides. If you have acute sciatica, discectomy will make you feel better more quickly than you would if you did nothing. But if you have chronic lower-back pain, the case for surgery—particularly fusion—is far more tenuous.

I recently met with a surgeon who performs two or three spinal fusions a week. I will call him Dr. Wheeler. (Like some of the doctors I spoke with, he was concerned that candid answers would damage his standing in the medical community and reduce patient referrals.) "Spinal instability is routinely given as a diagnosis to these patients with chronic lower-back pain," Wheeler said. "It is a term used to justify an operation. And it's a great diagnosis, because it can't be directly disproved."

For many years, Wheeler recommended that his patients with back trouble avoid fusion surgery unless it was absolutely necessary. (Fusion *is* clearly recommended when vertebral bones that have been dislocated or damaged by disease are endangering the spinal cord or the nerves.) But there are considerable forces weighing against his conservative advice, particularly when patients have had an accident or an injury on the job, and stand to benefit financially from persistent disability. "In my community, there is a group of neurologists who work directly with lawyers," Wheeler said. "The lawyers refer the patients to these neurologists after an accident or a work-related injury leaves them with back trouble. The neurologists charge up to fifteen hundred dollars for EMGs, then get five hundred dollars for their report to the attorney. In more than twenty years of practice, I have never seen them read an EMG as negative in an accident case. These patients are then told by the neurologists that they have severe disk disease. This enhances their perception of pain. And if they get operated on they don't necessarily have to go back to work."

Wheeler says that he is put in a difficult position whenever one of these referring neurologists tells a patient that tests or scans indicate there is something seriously wrong with his spine. "The neurologist, when challenged, says, 'I am pro-patient. I am a patient advocate.' Someone should audit the EMGs that they are doing—they're all read as positive, and it's nonsense."

Of course, most doctors do not engage in such egregious behavior, and many clinicians believe that they are providing their patients with the best advice available. Nevertheless, the culture of medicine fosters lucrative networks of referrals and procedures which discourage a critical examination of their value. For patients, the system of benefits also favors the trend toward surgery: they generally receive greater disability pay-

"What he lacks in foreign-policy experience he more than makes up for in money."

ments if they undergo back surgery, and higher benefits are paid for fusion operations than for discectomies. Eventually, Wheeler discovered that nearly all the patients he turned away ended up being operated on by other surgeons in his area. If his patients were going to have surgery, he reasoned, he may as well be the one to do it; at least he would know that the operation had been performed competently. Nor could he ignore the fact that, where he practices, the surgeon's full fee for a simple discectomy is between five and seven thousand dollars, and some twenty to thirty thousand dollars for a fusion.

Dr. Wheeler recently performed a spinal fusion on a forty-five-year-old U.P.S. worker. A year earlier, the patient had injured his back while lifting a package on the job, and although he had followed his doctor's recommendations, he was still experiencing severe pain. "Something needs to be done," he told Wheeler. The MRI scan showed disk degeneration, with narrowing and bulging between the fourth and fifth lumbar vertebrae and between the fifth lumbar and the first sacral vertebrae.

The patient was anesthetized and lay on a Jackson table, a large translucent platform that supports the chest and the thighs but allows the abdomen to hang free; this diminishes the pressure on the spinal veins and reduces hemorrhaging. After taking X-rays, Wheeler made a vertical incision some twelve inches long in the patient's lower back, exposing the taut sheath of connective tissue called fascia and the underlying paraspinal muscles. He then used a cutting cautery to burn through the tissues that lie above the spinal column. Acrid smoke wafted up from the patient's back.

"Periosteal elevators," Wheeler said to a resident, who picked up a large metal instrument that resembled a straight spoon with a sharp tip and used it to pull back the bulky muscles surrounding the spine. Wheeler continued with the cutting cautery, and blood flowed into the open wound. Once the muscles had been stripped from the spine, the yellow-white bone of the spinous process—the protruding ridge of the spine that you feel when you run your hand down your back—was exposed. Using rongeurs, which look like hedge clippers, Wheeler snipped at the spinous process while the nurse collected the bone chips—approximately the size of matchsticks—in a sterile basin. After about twenty minutes of cutting, the dura covering the spinal nerves became visible: a gray-blue tube speckled with blood and slivers of bone.

This was one of the most sensitive points in the operation. A tear in the dura would cause the spinal fluid to leak out, and a surgical slip could permanently damage the spinal nerve. Using a high-speed drill with a very fine bit, Wheeler made holes in the vertebral bones on either side of the spine. "It looks like we are construction workers, not surgeons," he said. He then inserted titanium screws into the holes with a screwdriver.

There are several types of lumbar fusions; Wheeler was performing what is termed a PLIF, a posterior lumbar interbody fusion. After removing the degenerated disks, he would insert bone grafts, which had been harvested from the tibia of a cadaver and customized to fit between the patient's vertebrae. Then the titanium screws and rods would be joined together on each side of the vertebrae, with a connecting rod between them, in the form of an H.

The disk is on the front side of the spinal cord; to expose it, the resident retracted the nerve and the dura. Wheeler was handed a scalpel with a small blade. He gingerly cut into the annulus and, using a curette, scooped out pieces of the disk, which looked like the yellowish gristle at the end of a drumstick. Then, with a fine chisel, he scraped the under-

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BODY AND SOUL

(For Coleman Hawkins)

The structure of landscape is infinitesimal,
Like the structure of music,
seamless, invisible.
Even the rain has larger sutures.
What holds the landscape together, and what holds music together,
Is faith, it appears—faith of the eye, faith of the ear.
Nothing like that in language,
However, clouds chugging from west to east like blossoms
Blown by the wind.
April, and anything's possible.

Here is the story of Hsuan Tsang.
A Buddhist monk, he went from Xian to southern India
And back—on horseback, on camelback, on elephantback and on
foot.
Ten thousand miles it took him, from 629 to 645,
Mountains and deserts,
In search of the Truth,
the heart of the heart of Reality,
The Law that would help him escape it,
And all its attendant and inescapable suffering.
And he found it.

These days, I look at things, not through them,
And sit down low, as far away from the sky as I can get.
The reef of the weeping cherry flourishes coral,
The neighbor's back-porch light bulbs glow like anemones.
Squid-eyed Venus floats forth overhead.
This is the half hour, half-light, half-dark,
when everything starts to shine out,
And aphorisms skulk in the trees,
Their wings folded, their heads bowed.

Every true poem is a spark,
and aspires to the condition of the original fire
Arising out of the emptiness.
It is that same emptiness it wants to reignite.
It is that same engendering it wants to be reëngendered by.
Shooting stars.
April's identical,
celestial, wordless, burning down.
Its light is the light we commune by.
Its destination's our own, its hope is the hope we live with.

Wang Wei, on the other hand,
Before he was 30 years old bought his famous estate on the Wang River
Just east of the east end of the Southern Mountains,
and lived there,
Off and on, for the rest of his life.
He never travelled the landscape, but stayed inside it,
A part of nature himself, he thought.
And who would say no
To someone so bound up in solitude,
in failure, he thought, and suffering.

Afternoon sky the color of Cream of Wheat, a small
Dollop of butter hazily at the western edge.
Getting too old and lazy to write poems,
I watch the snowfall
From the apple trees.
Landscape, as Wang Wei says, softens the sharp edges of isolation.
Don't just do something, sit there.
And so I have, so I have,
the seasons curling around me like smoke,
Gone to the end of the earth and back without a sound.

—*Charles Wright*

surface of the vertebra; the remaining cartilaginous disk came off with bloody pieces of bone. "You want raw, bleeding bone," Wheeler said to the resident. "It has all sorts of growth factors and substances that facilitate the fusion of the grafts." He then took the cadaver grafts and inserted them snugly between the vertebrae. Wheeler repeated the procedure between the fifth lumbar and the first sacral vertebrae. Now the titanium rods, each of which was five and a half millimetres in diameter and some fifteen centimetres in length, had to be cut to fit the patient's anatomy.

Because more bone is needed to complete a fusion than can be harvested from the spine, Wheeler then used the cautery to tunnel through the patient's right buttock to the crest of the iliac bone. Using an osteotome, a long, thin, chisel-like instrument, he chopped deep into the bone, producing additional chips. "The bone from the iliac crest of the pelvis is potatoes, and what we have from the spinous process of the vertebrae is just the gravy," Wheeler explained.

Wheeler showed the resident how to secure the titanium rods with the screws. A crossbar was then attached, completing the H figure. "Wring out the pads," Wheeler said to the resident. The resident picked up the blood-soaked gauze and squeezed the liquid into the metal basin that contained the bone chips. The slurry of bone chips and blood was layered along the sides of the titanium rods. Over time, this mixture would solidify, further supporting the spine. Finally, the retractors that held back the paraspinal muscles were ratcheted down, and the muscles and skin were sutured and stapled together. The procedure had taken nearly five hours.

What are this patient's prospects for a future that is free from back pain? Fairly poor. Dr. Eugene Carragee, at Stanford, performs the operation only on a select group of patients who have been carefully screened. Even so, he estimates that less than a quarter of the operations will be completely successful. For the majority of patients, the surgery does not have a dramatic impact on either their pain or their mobility.

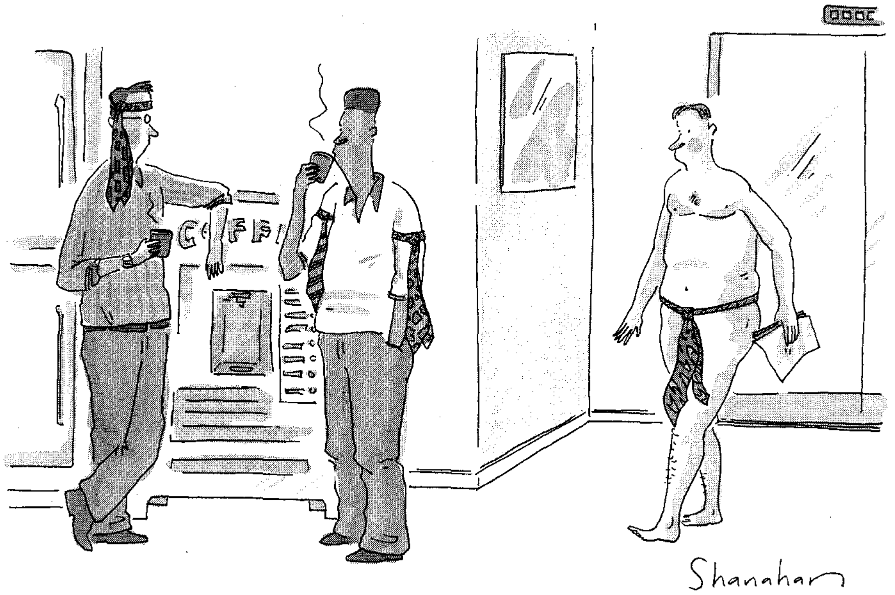
Many patients end up going back to their surgeons; a study of workers injured on the job in the state of Washington who received fusions for degenerative-disk disease reported that twenty-two per cent had further surgery. Dr. Waldman, at New York's Hospital for Special Surgery, regularly sees spinal-fusion patients who experience persistent pain after multiple operations. Yet few patients facing spinal surgery seem to have any idea that the statistics are so unfavorable, and within the surgical profession itself there's a curious gap between rhetoric and reality. Last December, the journal *Spine* published the results of an award-winning study from Scandinavia in which patients who underwent fusion surgery for chronic lower-back pain were compared with those who had had no surgery. In this randomized controlled trial, only one out of every six of the patients in the surgical group was rated by an independent observer as having an "excellent" result after two years. It's a measure of how weak the empirical support for fusion surgery has been that this study is seen as bolstering its legitimacy within the profession.

When you look at the recent history of back surgery, in fact, you can't help wondering whether many surgeons simply don't want to subject their practices to rigorous review. In 1993, the federal Agency for Health Care Policy and Research convened a panel of twenty-three experts in back pain from a wide spectrum of disciplines—neurology, orthopedics, internal medicine, radiology, chiropractic, rheumatology, psychology, nursing. Among its members was Richard Deyo, an internist and an expert on back pain at the University of Washington. Deyo had recently published a statistical analysis of existing research which suggested that spinal fusion generally lacked scientific rationale, and also that it had a significantly higher rate of complication than did discectomy. The panel was to formulate guidelines for the clinical management of acute lower-back pain by evaluating the scientific evidence concerning its diagnosis and treatment. Although the panel did not discuss coverage, it seemed likely that Medicare and private insurers would consider these guidelines when determining reimbursement for different diagnostic and treatment approaches.

Fusion surgery was not explicitly addressed by the panel, since it was considering treatment options for patients only in the first three months after the onset of back pain. Nevertheless, almost as soon as the panel convened, it came under attack. Contending that the deliberations were not an open process and that the panelists were biased against surgery, a group of spine surgeons, led by Dr. Neil Kahanovitz, an orthopedist who was then a board member of the North American Spine Society, lobbied Congress to cut off A.H.C.P.R.'s funding. Deyo recently told me that the line taken by the opponents of the panel was " 'These guys are anti-surgery, they're anti-fusion.' But we really had no axe to grind," he went on. "Our aim was to critically examine the evidence and outcomes of common medical practices."

After the November, 1994, elections, the lobbyists found the newly configured House of Representatives receptive. "It was the time of Newt Gingrich, and the Contract with America," Deyo recalled. "Although the American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians, and the American Hospital Association all tried to save the A.H.C.P.R., the House zeroed out its budget." The lobbying battle moved to the Senate, and though the federal agency ultimately survived, its funds were drastically cut. Sofamor Danek, a company that manufactured hardware used in fusion surgery, sought a court injunction to block publication of the committee's findings. The guidelines that were eventually published were medically conservative, but the furor surrounding the panel tainted its credibility, and its recommendations have had little impact on surgical practice.

Kahanovitz still defends his earlier actions. But even he admits that he is worried by what he views as a proliferation of spinal fusions. "When I began in spine, there were a handful of fellowships in the country," Kahanovitz said. "There are now over eighty fellowship programs in spine surgery. That means each year more and more specialists are being trained." And those specialists, of course, seek opportunities to use their training. The technology, too, has rapidly developed. "We have new toys to play with—all sorts of screws, rods, and cages." These instruments are aggressively marketed, and generate high profit margins—both for the manufacturers and for the hospitals that use them. At the same time, Kahanovitz said, "We still don't have a clue where the pain is coming from in the vast majority of chronic sufferers."



CASUAL TIEDAY

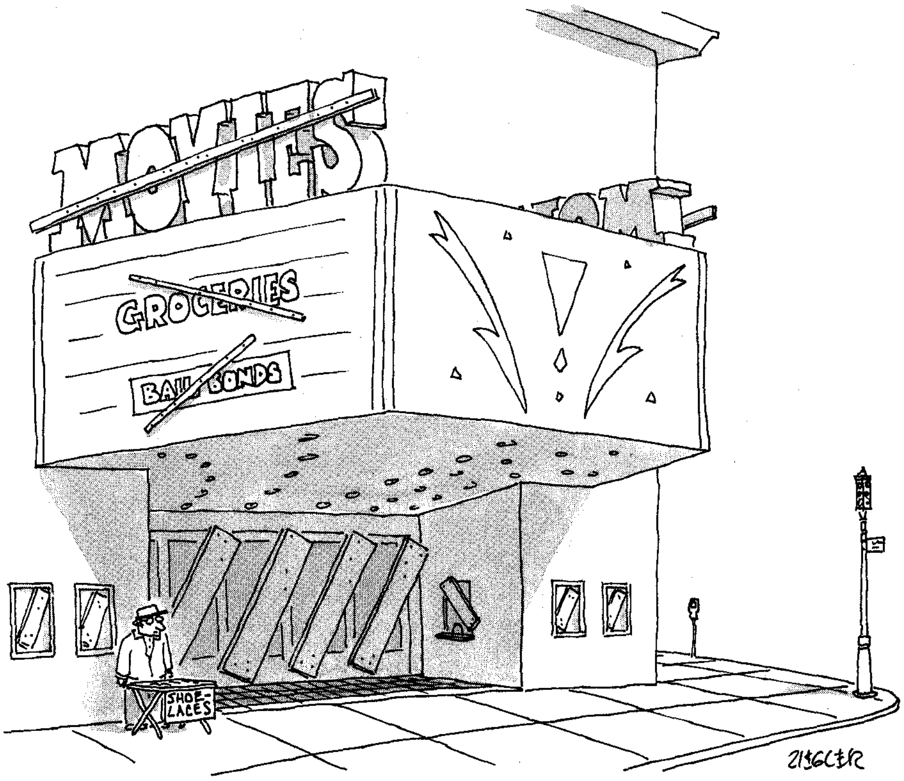
Like most patients who have undergone spinal fusions, I continued to have persistent lower-back pain afterward: I couldn't run, I couldn't drive for long stretches, I couldn't carry heavy grocery bags. When I returned to my surgeon to report on my poor recovery, he offered to perform the operation again. I declined, but I never questioned his medical rationale—that fusion, although it is a major operation with a high rate of complication, had been my only chance to be free from pain. I simply assumed that I had been very unlucky.

In the past few years, however, reports of other treatment options have begun to circulate. In 1999, the Physicians Neck and Back Clinic, in Minnesota, conducted a study in which sixty patients whose doctors had recommended back surgery agreed to participate in a ten-week program of aggressive strengthening exercises. Forty-six completed the program; thirty-eight of those were available for follow-up, and only three elected to have surgery. The study concluded that many patients who had been told they needed surgery were able to avoid it in the short term by following an exercise regimen, and suggested that doctors needed to reassess their definition of "adequate conservative care" for back pain. Shortly after the study was published, a friend suggested that I attend a similar program at the New England Baptist Spine Center, in Boston.

A first-time visitor to the Baptist Spine Center is greeted by the sight of a large exercise room, full of men and women of all ages engaged in just the sorts of activities that most people who suffer from back pain have been warned against: running on treadmills, lifting weights with their knees, stacking milk crates filled with steel bricks. In addition to the machines that one finds in an ordinary gym, there are specially designed "multihip" machines, back-strengthening machines, and a Roman chair, which braces your lower legs, knee-down, at a forty-degree angle from the floor as you attempt to hold up the rest of your body. Each patient's level of strength and degree of flexibility are carefully monitored. Records are also kept of the patient's capacity to execute ordinary activities: pick up a child, sit at a desk, have sexual intercourse. Each patient's regimen is designed to make the muscles strong again, the ligaments elastic, and the vertebrae well supported.

Dr. James Rainville, who is the head of the Spine Center, explains to his patients that although their pain is debilitating, it is not a sign that they are doing themselves any harm. Like many rehabilitative physicians, he believes that chronic pain originally has a physical cause but that it may become magnified and imprinted along the sensory pathways of the central nervous system. The solution, Rainville thinks, is to try to change the sensitivity of the neurofibres by "reëducating them" through strenuous exercise. In fact, the more the patient exercises correctly, the higher his pain threshold becomes. The hope is that his sensory circuits will be rewired to transmit signals of the healthy aches of exercise rather than the terrifying pain of debility.

Rainville's program of aggressive rehabilitation exercise has been supported during the past decade by prospective studies. A recent analysis of sixty-seven patients with long-standing back pain, nearly all of whom had had prior surgery or other forms of treatment, showed that the regimen improved physical capacity and reduced pain. Between twenty-five and forty per cent of the patients for whom performing flexion and extension maneuvers was painful when they entered the program were free from pain by the time they were discharged; the others experienced a marked reduction in the intensity of their pain. Still, Rainville argues, it will be impossible to properly compare the results of such nonsurgical interventions with surgery until both options are included in a well-designed randomized study.



Doctors often describe the treatment of lower-back pain as "an industry," and as long as patients are confronted with an array of conflicting advice, that's unlikely to change: the desperate patient sitting in the doctor's office is especially vulnerable to the persuasive recommendations of whatever professional he happens to be consulting. Nine months after meeting Trisha Bryant at the time of her discography, I called her to find out how she was doing. She had undergone fusion surgery in early December. "I'm actually in worse pain now than before the fusion operation," she told me. "My sciatica has returned." She has not been able to go back to work, and the pain prevents her from sitting, driving, or walking for extended periods of time. "I'm thirty-five years old," she said, "and I feel like I have the body of an eighty-year-old."

Dr. James Weinstein, the head of orthopedic surgery at Dartmouth and a leading expert in back pain, believes that there needs to be a radical improvement in the way doctors approach treatment: patients must be given unbiased information on what is known and not known about back pain and the various ways of treating it. Instead of informed consent, Weinstein advocates what he calls "informed choice"—a comprehensive understanding of all the options and their possible risks and benefits.

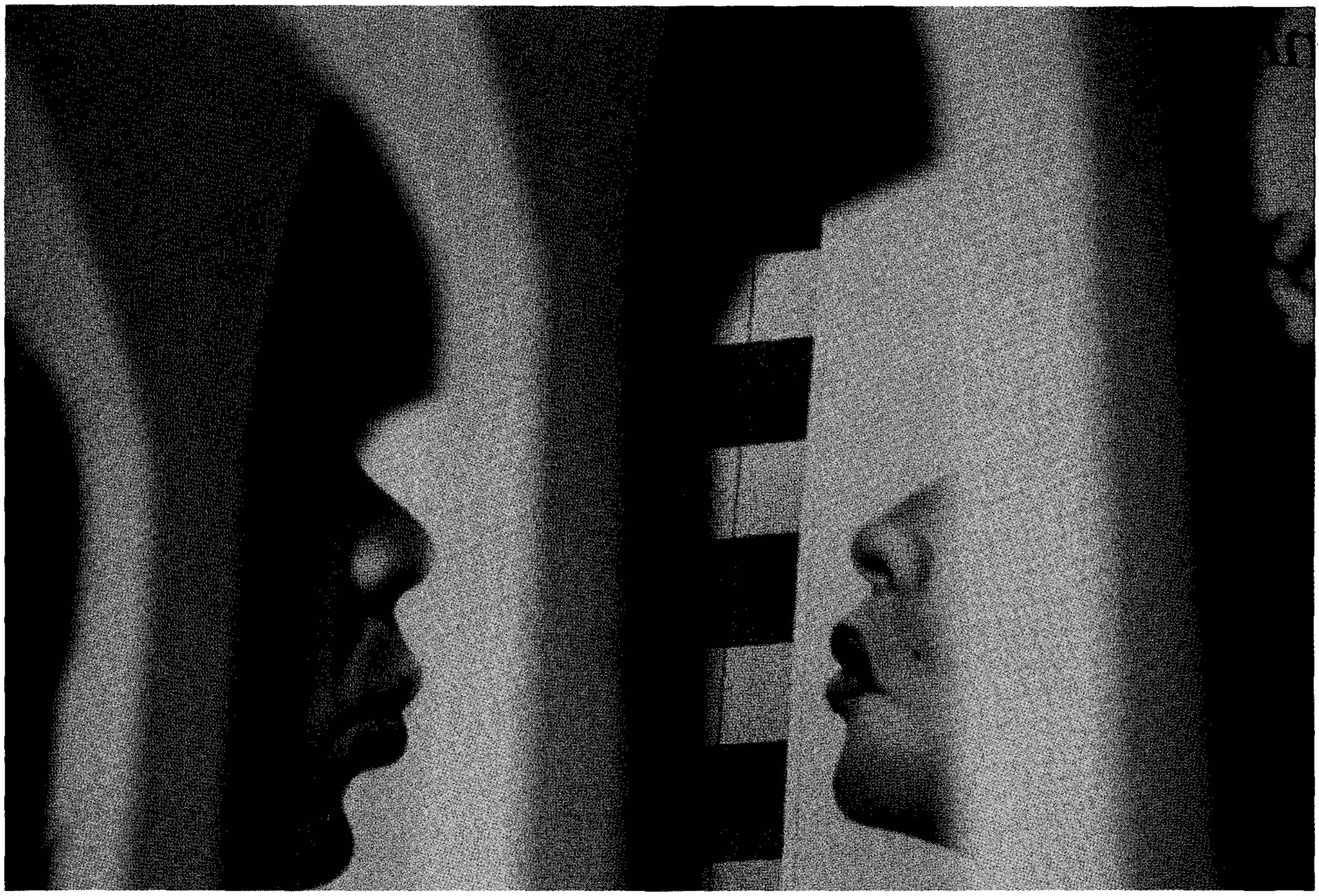
Weinstein is now leading the first prospective, randomized investigation of discectomy for ruptured lumbar disks to be conducted in nearly thirty years. This trial, which is sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, will cost more than thirteen million dollars. Even so, it will not address fusion surgery for chronic back pain; the participating physicians couldn't agree on diagnostic criteria and forms of treatment. For the tens of thousands of patients facing lower-lumbar fusion each year, no rigorous, government-sponsored study is forthcoming.

In the meantime, Dr. Seth Waldman, who sees the consequences of failed fusions at the Hospital for Special Surgery every week, wishes that the medical profession could be persuaded to show a little restraint. "If you have a screwdriver, everything looks like a screw," he said. "There will be a lot of people doing the wrong thing for back pain for a long time, until we finally figure it out. I just hope that we don't hurt too many people in the process." ♦

FICTION

OF MYSTERY THERE IS NO END

BY LEONARD MICHAELS



JEFF JACOBSON

Traffic might move at any moment. He might still get to the dentist on time, but Nachman was pessimistic and he assumed that he would miss his appointment. He pictured himself apologizing to Gudrun, the dentist's assistant, a pale Norwegian woman in her forties with white-blond hair. Nachman could almost hear his ingratiating tone. He was begging Gudrun to forgive him, swearing that it would never happen again, when he felt himself being watched. He looked to his left. In the car next to his, a young woman was staring at him. She looked away immediately and pretended to chat on a cell phone, as though indifferent to Nachman, who now stared at her. He saw heavy makeup and chemical red hair. She was smoking a cigarette and tapping the steering wheel with her thumb, keeping time to music on her car radio. Nachman imagined reaching into her car, snatching away her cell phone and cigarette, turning off her radio, and ordering her to sit still. She would soon be reduced to quivering lunacy. Drivers in Los Angeles shoot one another for no reason, let alone for rude staring.

Of course, Nachman would never have shot anybody. He pitied the woman who encumbered her head with cell phones, cigarettes, popular music, and unnatural colors. Compared to her, Nachman was a sublime being. He could sit alone for hours in his office with only a pencil and a notebook. Thinking. In fact, there was a pencil and a notebook in the glove compartment. Nachman's car could be his office. He would do math problems. Millions were stalled and rotting in their cars in Los Angeles, but Nachman had internal resources.

He leaned toward the glove compartment and, just as he touched the release button, his eye was drawn by a flash of black hair. He looked. Adele Novgorad, the wife of Nachman's best and oldest friend, Norbert Novgorad, was standing on the sidewalk. Nachman wanted to call out her name, but hesitated. He was sure it was Adele, though she was turned away from him. Few people in Los Angeles had such wonderfully black hair and skin so white. But she was talking to a man who had an unusually large and intimidating mustache, and they stood close together—too close—facing each other in front of a motel, about ten yards from Nachman's car. Horns blared behind Nachman. He heard the horns, but they meant nothing. Adele and the man had begun kissing.

The horns blared again and again and at last they pierced Nachman's trance. He looked away from Adele to the road, but for Nachman, still shocked by what he had seen, the avenue, the traffic, the buildings were all meaningless. He grasped the steering wheel. Fairfax Avenue was clear for a thousand yards straight ahead, but he didn't step on the gas pedal. He looked back at Adele. She had stopped kissing the man, though she still clung to him; the man had now heard the horns and was looking over her shoulder at Nachman's car. When their eyes met, Nachman stepped on the gas and released the clutch. In the rearview mirror, he saw Adele separate from the man. He was pointing at Nachman's car. Adele looked. Having seen too much, Nachman had been seen.

Driving south down Fairfax, Nachman felt something like a thrill of departure, as when a boat leaves the shore, but the thrill was unpleasant. He seemed to be departing from himself, or from everything familiar to himself. Through the blur of feeling, a voice spoke to him: "You must tell Norbert what you saw on Fairfax Avenue." It was Nachman's own voice, commanding and severe.

He could drive to the community college where Norbert was a professor. And then what? Interrupt a lecture or a department meeting to tell him that he had seen Adele kissing somebody? How ridiculous. Besides, if he told Norbert, Adele would hate him. She, too, was his friend. She had invited Nachman to dinner many times, and she always gave him a tight hug and a kiss when he arrived and again when he left, pressing her warm lips against his cheek. She cooked special dishes for Nachman. To please her, he cried out with pleasure at the first bite, and when she looked gratified he took more delight in her expression than he did in the food. With her cooking and hugs and kisses, Adele made Nachman feel that he was very important to her. He liked her enormously. He also got a kick out of her smile, which was usually accompanied by a frown, as if happiness were a pleasant form of melancholy. Nachman sometimes wanted to lean across the dinner table and kiss the lines in her brow. He suddenly heard himself speak again, in a cruel voice, as if he were a stranger to himself and had no regard for his own feelings about Adele: "You must tell Norbert what you saw on Fairfax Avenue."

Nachman hammered the dashboard with his fist and shouted an obscenity. In the twenty-first century, in Los Angeles, a great city of cars where no conceivable depravity wasn't already boring to high-school kids, Nachman, a grown man, found himself agonized by an ancient moral dilemma.

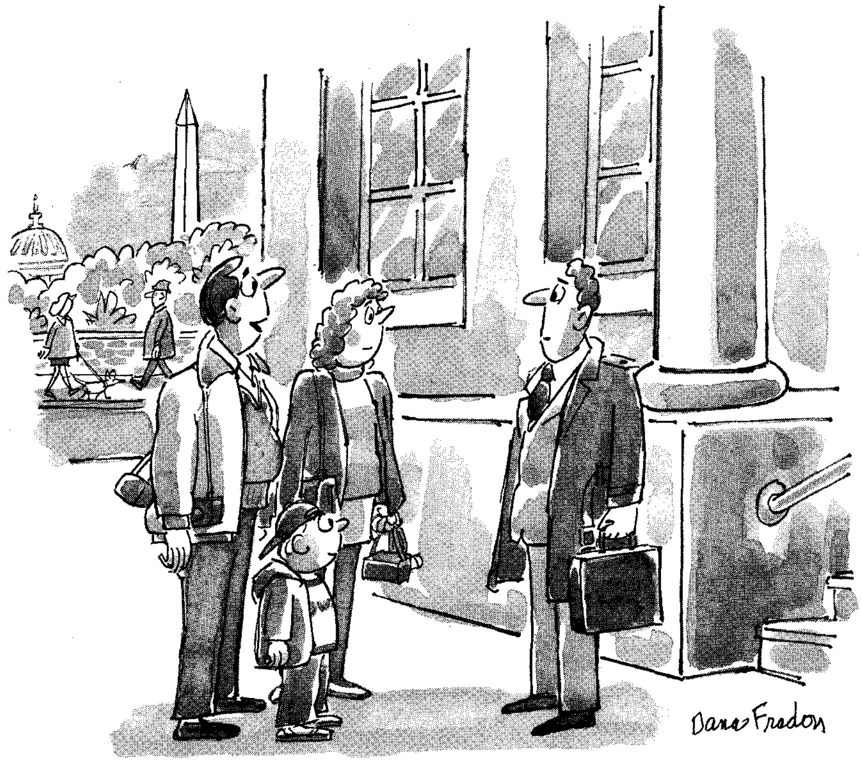
Was it his duty to tell Norbert or to protect Adele? Would it make any difference if he told Norbert? Yes, it would make a difference. The friendship would be ruined. Nachman forced himself to ask: Did he want to hurt his friend Norbert? There was no reason to tell him, unless he wanted to hurt him. People who told unbearable news to friends, as if it were their duty, and then felt very good about themselves while their friends felt miserable—Nachman was not like those people. Besides, to feel good about oneself was important only to narcissists, not to Nachman. Nachman loved his friend Norbert and would sooner cut off his own arm than hurt him just to feel good about himself. In the righteous fervor of his thinking, Nachman forgot about his dental appointment.

He drove to the ocean and turned toward Malibu. He barely noticed that he had passed his house. After a while, he saw a place to stop. He parked close to the beach and left his car. He trudged along the sand without taking off his shoes. The ocean was a sheet of glinting metallic brilliance. Gulls were dark blades soaring in the white glare of the afternoon sun. For the gulls, light was no different from air. For Nachman, the difference between one thing and another was the most serious consideration in life. The gulls brought this home to him with terrible poignancy. He remembered his first lesson in mathematics, when he had learned about differences.

After his parents had divorced, when Nachman was five, and his father had moved out, Nachman's mother's aunt, Natasha Lurie, had come to stay. She was a small elderly woman from St. Petersburg, Russia, and had been a well-known mathematician in her youth. She decided to teach Nachman mathematics, and began the lesson by asking him, in a soft tired voice, to write the word "mathematics." Nachman wrote it phonetically, with an "a" in the middle. Natasha, who reminded him of clothes hanging on a line, susceptible to the least touch of the wind, took Nachman's pencil out of his hand. Pinching the pencil between her own skinny white fingers, she dragged the eraser back and forth on the paper, back and forth until the "a" was obliterated. Then she drew a round and perfect "e," pushing the pencil point into the fibre of the paper and pulling the shape of the letter, like a small worm, slowly into view. More than four decades later, trudging on the beach in Malibu, Nachman saw again the red rims of Aunt Natasha's ancient eyes. She looked at Nachman to see if he understood. The lesson had had little to do with spelling or with mathematics. She had taught him that there was a right way. It applied to everything.

He thought of Adele smooching on Fairfax Avenue as he trudged back to his car and drove to Santa Monica and then to his house. When he opened the door, Nachman heard the phone ringing. It continued to ring while he looked through the mail he had collected from the box attached to the front of his house. He entered his study and sat down at his rolltop desk. The phone continued ringing.

Nachman put the bills in one pile and dropped junk mail, unopened, into a wastebasket. Then he opened his personal mail. He found a request: Would Professor Nachman read the manuscript of a proposed mathematics textbook? It was being considered for publication by a major East Coast firm. The job would take many hours. Nachman would be paid five hundred dollars for his opinion and suggestions. It wasn't much money, but he supposed he was expected to feel honored by the request. He then found two invitations. One was to a conference on mathematical physics, in Indiana. Why had they invited Nachman? It wasn't his specialty. The appropriate mathematicians had probably turned them down. The second invitation was for a defense job. It had to do with anti-ballistic-missile systems and would pay



"Pardon me, but could you tell us where the public trough is?"

• •

ten times what Nachman was making at the Institute of Mathematics. It was a job, Nachman guessed, that was held only by third-rate mathematicians and by spies. Anti-ballistic missiles, indeed. Nachman felt insulted. What a terrible day. The phone was ringing. Nachman went to the bathroom and swallowed an aspirin. He then went to the bedroom and sat on the edge of his bed and took off his shoes and socks. The phone on his night table was ringing.

Late afternoon light, filtered by the leaves of an avocado tree outside his bedroom window, glowed on the pine floor and trembled like the surface of a pond. It was a beautiful and deeply pleasing light, but the roots of the magnificent avocado tree had been undermining the concrete foundation of Nachman's house for years. He thought about that almost every day. Sooner or later, he would have to choose between the tree and the resale value of the house.

There was sand in his shoes and socks, and sand between his toes. On the night table beside the bed, the phone was ringing. Nachman lay down on his back and placed his right forearm across his eyes.

Let the foundation be torn apart. Let the house fall down. Let the phone ring. Nachman would sleep. Let the phone ring. . . . It was impossible to sleep. Nachman sat up on the edge of his bed and lifted the receiver. He didn't say hello.

"It's me," she said.

"Goodbye," Nachman said.

"Don't you dare hang up. You knew it was me. You could hear the ringing. You're the only person in California who doesn't have an answering machine. You heard the phone. Why didn't you pick it up?"

"Between you and me, Adele, a certain subject does not exist."

"If any subject doesn't exist, no subject exists."

"So we have no subjects."

"I caused you pain. Is that it?"

"I live a simple life. Like a peasant. I go to work. After dinner I go to sleep. I have no interest in adventures."

"We have different needs. I'm not you, Nachman. And you are not me. I couldn't live without an answering machine or a television set."

"O.K., let's leave it at that. I have a headache."

"I don't want to leave it at that. I want to understand. I have great respect for your opinions."

"Adele, I am not in the mood for a confessional orgy. I will say only this—I don't believe that experience, for its own sake, is the highest value. Kissing in the street, in the middle of Los Angeles . . . For God's sake. How could you?"

"You saw me kissing a guy. Was it a threat to your peasant simplicity?"

"In the middle of the afternoon, on Fairfax Avenue, with the *bubees* and *zeydes* walking home with grocery bags. There are limits."

"I think you mean morals."

"O.K., morals. Yes, morals. You have something against morals?" Nachman heard himself shouting and felt his breath coming faster.

"Morals-schmorals. It sounds to me like you think I did something to you personally."

"I saw you kissing some guy who isn't Norbert, my best friend, who happens to be your husband. It was a spectacle of irresponsible lust performed in public, in my face—Norbert's best friend."

"Nachman, get ahold of yourself! How the fuck would I know that Norbert's best friend was stopped in traffic, twenty feet away?"

"You trivialize my feelings."

"What is it that you feel? Tell me exactly."

"This minute, talking to you, I feel exactly as if I were betraying Norbert."

"Oh, please. Every time you look at me, you betray Norbert. When I stroll down Wilshire Boulevard, Norbert is betrayed sixty times a minute. I answer the door to the postman, Norbert has horns. This is California, not Saudi Arabia. I'm a woman on display, front and back. Do you know it's been said that a modern woman can neither dress nor undress."

"Who said it?"

"I don't know, but it's true. Look, all that matters is you and me, Nachman—we're friends. Our conversation is not a betrayal of anybody. Aren't we friends? I thought we were friends."

Adele was crying.

"Of course," Nachman said, his voice hoarse, on the verge of failure.

"Nachman, are you in love with me?" Adele said. "Is that the real problem here?"

"I love many people."

"Liar. You love your mother in San Diego, and you never talk about your father or your colleagues or the women you date. Anyhow, I said 'in love with me.' "

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"It has to do with everything. Norbert is the injured party, not you. Don't you hear yourself?"

"What should I hear?"

"Don't be a mystery to yourself, Nachman. Maybe we all walk in darkness, shadows, mystery—I wouldn't deny it—but you must try to understand. Of mystery there is no end. Of clarity there is precious little."

"Adele, you're raving. Stop it."

She spoke in a rush, sniffling and sobbing, "O.K., I'll stop, but I want to make things clear to you. The telephone is no damn good. Let's meet at Calendar's, near the La Brea Tar Pits. It's a few blocks from my office. I go there for lunch. One o'clock tomorrow. If you don't show up, Nachman, I'll understand that you didn't want to betray Norbert. But please do show up."

After the phone call, Nachman felt better. Nothing had actually changed, and yet he could think more liberally about what hadn't changed.

He continued to sit on the edge of his bed. He didn't want to move. It seemed he could still hear Adele's unmelodious voice, which had been made ragged by cigarettes. Adele had urged him to examine his feelings, but he didn't care to know too much about what he felt. After all, as soon as you know what you feel, you feel something else. No. There would be no such examination. It was enough that he felt cheered by Adele's phone call. He admired her daring. He was reminded of how he liked her sluggish, heavy carriage. She walked as if she had large breasts, though they were average, proportionate to her height, which was about five feet five inches. Her hips seemed to lock slowly, and then reluctantly to unlock as she walked, toes pointed outward. Nachman wanted, mindlessly, to hug her.

O.K., he thought, energized, returning to himself, the moral being. Look at the issue analytically, from Adele's point of view. As Adele had said, people have different needs. So let's be fair to Adele, a green-eyed Hungarian woman with considerable intelligence and nice hips.

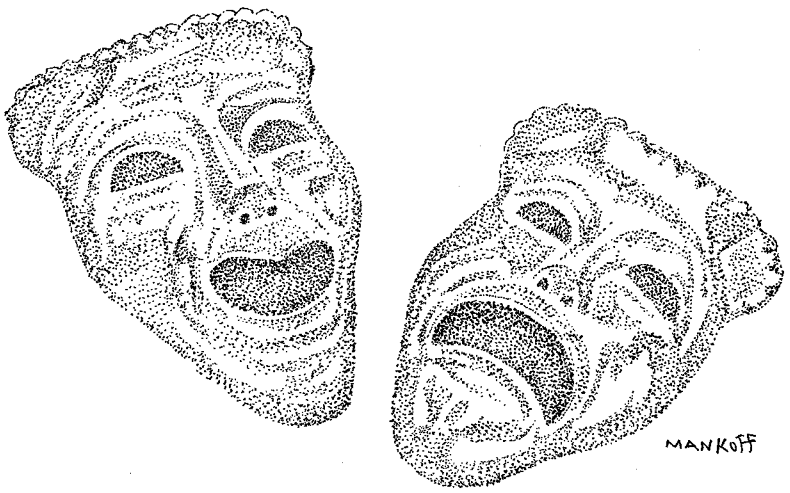
It was obvious, Nachman suddenly realized, that the unrelenting repetitiousness of domestic life was destroying Adele. So the poor woman had been unfaithful. What was infidelity, anyhow? What was it precisely that Adele might have done? Let's get that straight. She kissed a man? Big deal. Perhaps she had sexual intercourse? Oh, who cares? It was an imaginative experience, a mental tonic, like a trip to Paris, except of course you don't bring back photographs of yourself in a motel room performing fellatio to show your friends. But who cares? With stunning visionary force, a picture burst into Nachman's mind. Adele was naked, lying on her back with her wrists tied to bedposts. She smiled with vague, soporific satisfaction at Nachman, her green eyes glazed by a delirium of pleasure as she said, in her cigarette voice, "Morals-schmorals."

The picture vanished. Nachman looked down at his shoes, which he had dropped beside the bed. He felt an extraordinary need for ordinariness. His shoes were British. Hand-sewn, soft, reddish-brown leather. He'd worn them for years and he'd had them resoled and re-heeled at least three times. He kept them oiled. They were molded perfectly to the shape of his feet and so pliant they felt buttery. It occurred to Nachman, though he hadn't been thinking about it, that maybe Norbert already knew about Adele's lover.

If Norbert knew, and if Nachman told Norbert what he had seen, it might be grotesquely embarrassing. Boundaries are crucial to the integrity of relationships. That settled it. He wouldn't tell Norbert and he wouldn't meet Adele for lunch. It was an enormous relief to have arrived at this understanding of his situation.

Traffic moved normally the next afternoon, so Nachman was on time when he parked his car in the lot near the La Brea Tar Pits. Calendar's was crowded. Waiters rushed down the aisles, with expressions of intense concentration, as if solving puzzles. There was ubiquitous chatter and laughter. Nachman looked around for Adele. When he saw her, he took a breath and started toward her table. She was wearing sandals, jeans, a celadon-green tank top, and a thin beaded necklace of primary colors. Beside her wine glass was a newspaper, which she pressed down with her hand as she read it. She glanced up as Nachman approached. She smiled, folded the newspaper, and dropped it beneath her chair. She continued smiling as Nachman sat down. He looked at her tank top and her necklace. He looked at her wedding ring, a barrel of dull yellow, and then at her watch. It had a large face, etched with black numerals, and a clear plastic band. Adele continued smiling. Nachman shook his head ruefully as he finally looked directly at her face.

Her black shining hair was pulled back severely, and tied with a red ribbon. She wore assertive poppy-red lipstick. In gold-framed glasses, her eyes, related to the color of her tank top though much brighter, accepted Nachman's attention, but he could see their



"So you're depressed. Everybody's depressed—some of us just handle it better than others."

uncertainty. Her smile became tentative. Quizzical.

"Order something," she said, unable to bear Nachman's silence.

"I don't want anything."

"Won't you have a glass of wine?" she implored, as if it would do her good if Nachman had a glass of wine. Her smile was weak.

"All right."

Adele raised her hand. A passing waiter stopped. Adele said, "Two more," pointing to her wine glass. The waiter nodded.

"I shouldn't have another," Adele said. "I have to work on a difficult case this afternoon. I hired a new assistant. A gay kid named Geoffrey Horley Harms. He has two degrees. Three names and two doctorates, can you believe it?" She paused, then said, "What are you thinking?"

"I wasn't thinking."

"You've never been married. You don't know what it's like."

Nachman looked around at the action in the restaurant and sighed.

Adele said, "This is going nowhere. Look at me, please. I want to talk to you. I wasn't raised by Protestants. I'm not a nice person. Do you follow me? I'm a very direct person."

"What are you talking about?"

"I want your full attention."

"O.K."

"I'm glad you saw me outside the motel."

"I was stuck in traffic. I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry. I'm grateful. What you saw has been going on for a long time, but I could never tell anybody. If I told my girlfriends it would be unfair to Norbert. I'm bad, but I'm not evil. The guy you saw me with—Ivan—is from another life. I was in high school when we met. I was a kid. Ivan was already out of college, working. His mustache got to me. I don't know why. It made his face so fierce. But Ivan is very kind. He is in the insurance business, a claims adjuster. He doesn't live in Los Angeles. Sometimes he disappears for two or three years, then he phones me as if we were still together. As if I had never married. People stare at him because of his mustache. When he wears dark glasses he has no face, just a nose."

"Adele, what did you want to talk about?"

"I'm talking about it."

Nachman shut his eyes for a second, as if things would be different when he opened them. Nothing was different.

"Ivan phoned again a few days ago. Believe me, I was very clear and firm. I said I wouldn't meet him. I said that I felt bad about having done so in the past. I told him exactly how I felt. He started begging. I said no, no, no. The next day, he walked into my office. I almost fainted. He looked worse than shit. But the mustache was there, and old feelings were stirred. I was transported. What could I do? Even if I were a happily married woman, the old feelings would be there. I was helpless."

"Helpless? You?"

"Give me a break, Nachman."

"All right, you were helpless."

"So we went to a motel. Try to understand, Nachman. It's been going on for years, and I never told anyone. Motels. You wouldn't believe how many motels I've been in. Did you know that a lot of Indians are in the motel business?"

"I can't begin to tell you how interesting that is to me. Hindus or Muslims?"

"That's enough. I don't like being teased. So we went to the motel, a squalid dump at the edge of a trailer park."

A picture came. A motel room. The walls were water-stained and the paint was peeling away. Adele was standing beside a bed where a man lay. His eyes peered over a huge mustache, gazing at Adele as she stepped into her panties. She pulled them up, then plucked the material free of the crease in her behind. At that instant Nachman's wine glass was set before him. He reached too quickly and knocked the glass over. Wine splattered Adele.

Nachman said, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

Adele's tank top bore dark splotches like the shadows of maple leaves.

"They once threw stones," Adele said. "I'm getting off easy."

"What can I say?"

"I wanted you to listen. You don't have to say anything."

Adele swept her tongue across her teeth. A tiny dark-green shape, perhaps a piece of arugula, was plastered against her front tooth. Nachman ordered another glass of wine.

"If I hadn't seen you yesterday," he said, "nobody would ever have known."

"These things come out. I told Ivan it was over. I think he heard me this time. Why don't you order a sandwich or something? I already had a salad."

Nachman didn't want anything.

Outside the restaurant, they stopped for a moment in the sunlight and looked up the avenue toward the County Museum.

"We should go there someday," Nachman said. "See the show and then go somewhere and have lunch."

"I'd like that."

Nachman kissed Adele on the cheek. She said, "Do you think I should . . . now that I've told you?"

"Yes. Tell Norbert."

Nachman sounded principled, but he was already worried about whether Adele would ever invite him to dinner again. It would be a great loss if she decided that she had said too much and would prefer not to have Nachman around at the same time as her husband.

She had said that she was bad but not evil. Nachman wasn't sure what she'd meant. He supposed it had to do with Norbert's integrity. How he lived, consciously or not, in the eyes of other people. That was important to Adele. She wanted to protect Norbert. It was an aesthetic as well as a moral consideration. She'd had a long affair with Ivan, the mustache, but everything had ended in the motel. Nachman decided that, even bad, Adele remained lovable.

A week later, Norbert phoned. It was late evening. Nachman heard fatigue and displeasure in Norbert's voice. It sounded like anger or controlled pain. All that had troubled Nachman the week before rushed into his mind. He felt regret and shame. He braced internally, expecting to hear Norbert say, "You're a rat, Nachman. I'm furious with you."

Nachman hadn't told Norbert what he'd seen on Fairfax Avenue, and he'd met Adele for lunch, thereby making himself complicitous. Nachman had agonized over those things, but to know what you're doing is not the same as fully appreciating the terribleness of it. Nachman pressed the receiver hard against his ear. He'd never felt worse. If punishment were available to people the moment they deserved it, Nachman would have been punished days before. He would then have been able to show Norbert the receipt. Nachman suddenly realized that every move a person made was to one degree or another criminal, and that there was a great shortage of punishment. These thoughts occurred in the instant before Norbert said, "Would you like to go for a drive? I bought a new car."

Norbert hadn't denounced him, thank God, but Nachman didn't look forward to the drive. Who knows what might be said? Who knows what lies Nachman might be obliged to tell? Nachman put down the receiver. His heart was beating quickly and heavily.

Fifteen minutes later, Norbert came by in his new car. It had a big engine and a dashboard like the flight panel of an airliner. Nachman had no idea what company made the car, and he wasn't curious. If the car nourished Norbert's spirit with fantasies of power, that was good.

"I like your new car," Nachman said. "Really great. Beautiful."

"Umm," Norbert said, as if distracted.

Norbert drove out of the city along the San Diego Freeway. When a stretch of open road appeared, he stepped hard on the gas pedal. Nachman's spine pressed against the seat.

"Too fast, don't you think?" Nachman said.

"Are you serious?" There was contempt in Norbert's question. He continued. "I do a hundred and fifty in the desert."

Nachman glanced at the speedometer, saw that it read ninety-five, and then glanced at Norbert. What was he thinking? Norbert sat rigidly, staring down the road as if hypnotized by a point far off in the darkness. He was driving toward that point at a greater and greater speed. But he was getting no closer, because the point existed only within Norbert, and they would probably be dead before he reached it. Minutes passed with only the drone of the big engine. The road rushed toward them and was swept under the devouring hood. Nachman watched cars and trucks far ahead loom suddenly and vanish in a blur and whoosh. Norbert was driving well over a hundred miles per hour, speeding deeper into the night. Nachman was terrified but, trying to be a good friend, he said nothing to ruin Norbert's mood. Norbert needed to be in charge, needed to terrify Nachman. If Nachman demanded to be let out, Norbert would doubtless slow down and apologize. Maybe he was waiting for Nachman to lose his composure. Nachman forced himself to abide silently in terror. He deserved it; he accepted it. Part of him imagined that he wanted it.

Norbert seemed abruptly to soften, to relent. He continued to stare straight ahead and was no less self-absorbed, but he slowed the car, then made a careful turn and drove back toward Santa Monica.

"Let's have a drink," he said.

With no enthusiasm, Nachman said, "Do you know a place?"

"I know a place."

Norbert drove into Venice, and then to a bar in the middle of a long, poorly lit street. It was a dark room with low ceilings and sawdust on the floor. Surfer types were shooting pool in the rear. Their girlfriends, scrawny blond kids who looked much alike, sat on a bench against a wall and smoked. Men in motorcycle leathers were drinking beer at one end of the bar. Nachman would never have come to this place alone. But Norbert had a thick neck and broad shoulders. He was also fearless. He was descended from Russian peasants. Shrewd, strong, dark, stocky, he had never once been sick or had a toothache. He'd played rugby in college, a game where men hurtle against one another, as in American football, but with no girlish helmets or shoulder pads. The atmosphere of the bar, like driving fast at night, seemed to suit Norbert's mood. Nachman didn't want to stay, but he felt he owed his friend company the way convicts owe a debt to society. Norbert said, "I want a vodka Martini. You, too?"

Nachman nodded yes, though he would have preferred a Coke. The bartender sneered, saying "Vodka Martini?" as if Norbert had asked him to dance naked on a table. Norbert stared with

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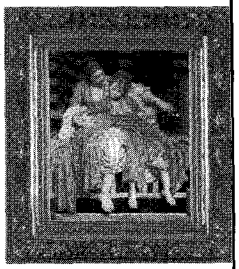

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"I enjoy poetry, but only if it's funny."

• •

no expression and said nothing, waiting for the bartender's next remark. There was none. The bartender made the drinks. Norbert carried them to a booth.

"Here's to life," he said, his tone sour.

"Are you troubled about something?" Nachman blurted out the question.

"That's how I seem to you?"

"Is there a problem?"

"Not my problem."

"Whose, then?"

"A guy in my department. You wouldn't understand."

"So it's an academic problem?"

"The most academic problem."

"What do you mean?"

"You heard of Plato? The ancient Greeks talked about this problem in their philosophy departments. It's about epistemology and fucking."

"Come on, Norbert, spare me the lecture. What about this guy in your department?"

Norbert shook his head, evidently overwhelmed by the prospect of telling Nachman about the guy. Muscles began working in Norbert's jaw, as if balls of feeling were being chewed. He seemed to have too much to say.

Nachman urged gently, "Tell me. What is the guy's problem?"

"I already told you too much. I shouldn't have said anything."

"You said almost nothing."

"All right, a student came on to him. That's the problem. O.K.?"

"Could you say a little more?"

"Forgive me for saying this, but you live a small life. Somebody gives you a pencil and a piece of paper and you are a happy Nachman. Like a kid on a beach. Give him a pail and he is king of the sand. You follow? The sand is like life, but all you need is a pail."

"Is this about me?"

"Of course not."

"But you sound angry. Are you angry?" Nachman asked, risking the worst possible answer. He couldn't go on with so much bad feeling suppressed.

"I'm angry at the guy with the problem. What a jerk. Imagine you are in your office, and a beautiful girl in a miniskirt is standing two inches from your nose. She is looking into your eyes and she smells good."

"Why is she standing two inches from your nose?"

"It isn't because she is nearsighted. She has no idea that anything she does has consequences. She is a girl."

"All right, go on."

"This girl is asking for advice about her major. Naturally, given such a provocative question, blood begins bulging in your manly part."

"So what did this guy do?"

"He told her to get the hell out of his office and phone in her question."

"I'm beginning to see the picture."

"You disapprove? This is a story about nature. To you, maybe, nature is a foreign language."

"Finish the story. What happened with the girl?"

"This guy kissed her and he put his hand between her legs."

"Just like that? What did she say?"

"She said 'Ohhhhhh.' "

"I see the picture."

"The guy can't eat. Can't sleep. He is crazy with jealousy because she sleeps with other guys. Look, it's late. Do you want to get out of this dump and go home? You must want to go home. Say the word. Whatever you want."

"If it helps you to talk, Norbert, I'll listen all night. But there is something I must tell you."

"You needn't bother. I know you feel compromised. Adele told me about the mustache. She told me everything. It's not your fault that you saw her."

"So you're angry at Adele?"

"I love Adele. Who wouldn't love her? I asked her why is the mustache so important? Why do you need him? She says she doesn't know why. Nachman, you live with numbers. One plus one is two. It was always two, and it will always be two. For you there are problems, but no mysteries. The solutions exist, so take a vacation."

"Don't say another word. A vision is coming. I see a man who looks like me walking on a beach. He is on vacation. Now he is holding a shell to his ear, listening to the ocean, the chaos in which this shell was born. He knows that it was shaped according to a law which is expressed in the ratio of the rings on the shell. My God, he realizes, the shell can be described mathematically. The shell is a resolution of chaos, a mathematical entity. Do you understand?"

"Yes. You are constitutionally incapable of taking a vacation."

"What's real is numbers. When I solve a problem, I collect a piece of the real. Other men collect paintings, cars, Hawaiian shirts. They even collect women. So I'm a little different. You're angry at Adele, but why at me?"

"You need to believe I'm angry at you?"

Norbert was clearly angry at Nachman, but his anger was like the anger a parent feels for a much loved child. He was angry also because he had felt obliged, as a matter of pride, to confess the affair with the student. His confession had sounded like boasting. It was forced, somehow unconvincing. Nachman understood that Norbert was embarrassed as well as angry and that he was concerned to protect his wife.

"Does Adele know about the guy who kissed the girl?" Nachman asked.

"A man is a man."

"He doesn't have to account for himself?"

"There is always something for which there is no accounting. Take, for example, the whole world."

"This is between you and me, not you and the whole world. If you're angry at me, you should tell me why."

"Let's go. I'll drive you home."

Norbert got up and strode to the bar. He reached into his pants pockets, fingers scrabbling along his thighs, searching for money to tip the bartender. There had been ugly tension between them when he ordered. The gesture, as Nachman understood it, meant that Norbert was leaving with no hard feelings. It also meant that Norbert had forgiven Nachman.

They drove in silence to Nachman's house. As Nachman got out of the car, Norbert said, "Come to dinner this Friday. Adele told me to invite you." Norbert's expression, in the glow of the dashboard, was unreadable. His big head and the wide slope of his shoulders resembled a pit bull's. The shape was very familiar to Nachman. He realized that even if he saw only Norbert's head, at a distance, in a crowded street among a hundred moving heads, it would be enough for him to recognize his old friend.

Nachman said, "I'll look forward to dinner."

Later that night, Nachman sat in bed reading. The book was called "Die Innenwelt der Mathematik." Nachman read German slowly and with difficulty, struggling with the sentences, consulting a dictionary every few minutes. Five pages took him nearly an hour, but he persisted. The book examined the question of whether mathematics was a social creation or a mysterious gift offered to certain individuals. Nachman didn't see how it could be a social creation. Mathematicians collaborated sometimes, but he had never heard anyone say, "We solved the problem." Nachman had never even met a mathematician who could tell you how a solution had come to him or her. It just came or it didn't. The great genius Ramanujan said that the goddess Namakkal came to him in his dreams bearing formulas. Well, no goddess had ever come to Nachman. But he did occasionally awake at night and stumble from his bed to a table where he kept a pencil and paper. In the morning, when he discovered that he had scribbled the solution to a problem, he didn't always remember having done so. What could be less social? It couldn't even be said that Nachman socialized with himself. In truth, he didn't really know what "social" meant. He and Norbert were the closest of friends, but were they social? Norbert was Norbert. In his pit-bull head, he dreamed of cars. Nachman was Nachman. He dreamed of numbers.

With the "Innenwelt" book open in his lap, Nachman fell asleep and had a vivid, frightening dream. He saw Adele kissing the mustache man. Nachman ran desperately toward them to pull her away. "No!" he cried, and he found himself awake, crying, "No, no, no!" his feet churning beneath the blanket, running nowhere.

Shaken by the dream, Nachman turned off the lamp and lay staring into the darkness. He didn't know what, if anything, his dream had revealed to him. He was aware only of tumultuous feeling. He'd been aware of it before, when Adele had asked if he was in love with her. He imagined the silent question in her green eyes, and he heard her say, "I thought we were friends." Nachman suddenly felt very lonely, lying in the darkness, wondering if he was in love with Adele. ♦

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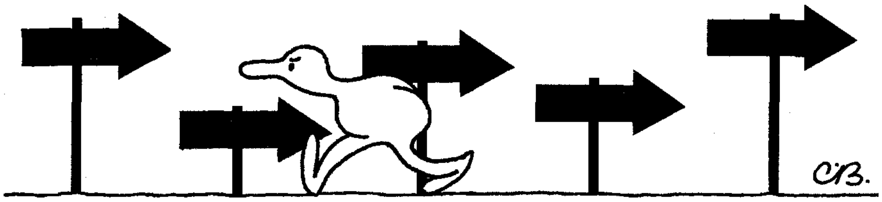


BOOKS

AFTER GOD

Nietzsche believed in limitless possibility. The world knew better.

BY CLAUDIA ROTH PIERPONT

In the fall of 1888, Friedrich Nietzsche proudly informed an admirer that he had completed "a ruthless attack on the crucified Christ." Long experience as both a soldier and a psychologist had taught him, he said, to bring the heavy guns of argument into action. "I swear to you," he added, "we shall have the whole world in convulsions. I am a fate." The frail author of this dire prediction collapsed in a Turin street just a few weeks later, after throwing his arms around a carriage horse to prevent the poor beast from being whipped. He was carried back to his hotel, where he began to shout and sing senselessly; he did not recover his reason again. Of the eleven books that Nietzsche had published before this abrupt end, at the age of forty-four, hardly more than five hundred copies had been sold in all. He lived on for more than a decade, empty-eyed and silent, entirely unaware of the readership that was beginning to spread like fire along the gunpowder trail he had laid from book to book. When the world convulsions began, in 1914, his works were often credited for what one English bookseller termed the "Euro-Nietzschean War," referring both to the war's outbreak and to the stunning brutality with which it was being fought. The Austrian Archduke had been assassinated by young Serbian militants spouting Nietzschean slogans in support of their national will to power. Copies of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," Nietzsche's most famous book, had been distributed to German troops in a durable military edition; in rucksacks all along the killing fields, it lay beside the Bible it had been meant to replace.

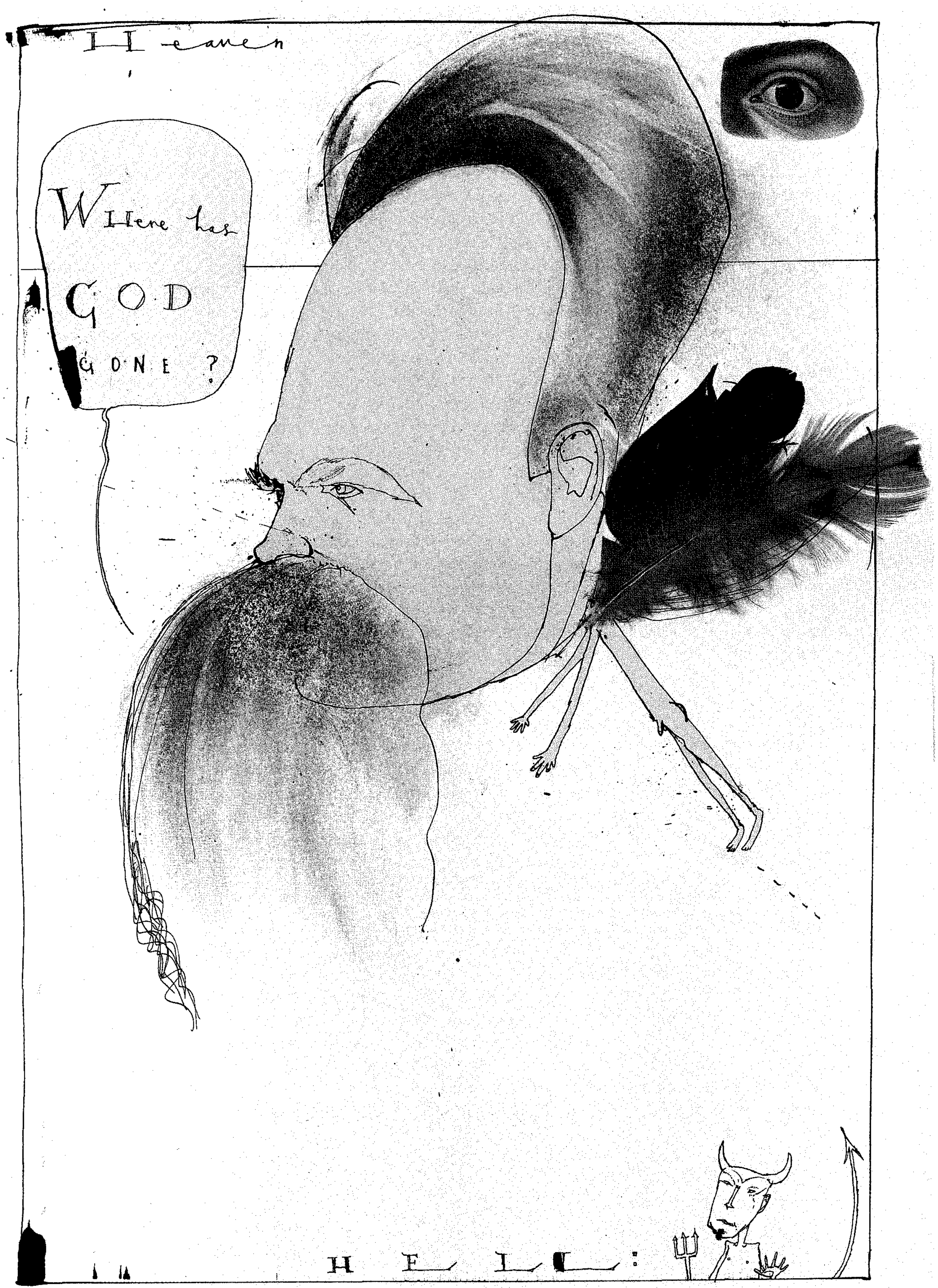
Hitler wouldn't have needed to read anything that Nietzsche wrote in order to assert a version of the "Nietzschean" ideas that were claimed by virtually every extreme of German political culture in the decades after the First World War. By the early twenties, crusaders for left-wing causes ranging from socialism to feminism had found in Nietzsche a thrilling incitement to "push whatever is falling," as he put it, and young people from conservative families who were discovered with his books were reportedly locked up with a priest for months. Then, as post-war crises propelled Germany ever farther to the right and into policies of racist hatred, readers increasingly drew a different sort of inspiration from the same books—sometimes from the same phrases. Notions of the "will to power" and the *Übermensch*, burdened with meanings never intended by an author who reserved his greatest contempt for anti-Semites, made Nietzsche the philosopher king of the Nazi state.

Perhaps it was simply "the clumsiest of all misunderstandings," as Thomas Mann wrote in 1947, that the works of this politically naïve and wholly spiritual figure somehow justified the Nazi assault on civilization. But Nietzsche had always insisted that reading, like writing, should be an act of self-creation: "One repays a teacher badly if one always remains a pupil." Thanks to his scornful rejection of systematic thinking and a style that makes substantial use of irony, ellipsis, and the riddling wisdom of a Shakespearean clown, his books have notoriously meant what his readers have wanted them to mean. In recent decades, there have been as many Nietzsches as there have been intellectual movements: existentialist, deconstructionist, postmodernist. And yet even those offering the most recondite reconsiderations—Heidegger, for supreme example, or Derrida—have been forced to acknowledge the tormenting historical questions that inevitably drag the most tragic figure of modern thought back down to earth. As Derrida notes of the Nazis' use of Nietzsche, "One can't falsify just anything."

Rüdiger Safranski's new book, "Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography," translated from the German by Shelley Frisch (Norton; $29.95), was originally published to coincide with the hundredth anniversary of the philosopher's death, in August, 2000. A landmark volume almost by definition, Safranski's work, which devotes a great deal of attention to Nietzsche's passion for music, is initially striking less for what the author has to say than for what he has chosen to leave out. Although he ably explores the anti-democratic aspects of Nietzsche's thought, its political uses and abuses after the philosopher's death are treated solely in an epilogue, where Safranski also confines his only consideration of Nietzsche's published writings about the Jews. These priorities do not necessarily constitute defects. Much has already been written about the subjects slighted here, and Safranski's book is, after all, about a philosophy, not its consequences. Yet his silences loom large in a work addressed to the general reader, and make one question whether it will ever be possible for Nietzsche to be released from the history that he inherited and helped to shape. Even now, Nietzsche remains something of a fate, demanding of his readers the courage to face the crises of his epoch, in which mankind first discovered itself alone in a godforsaken world.

The death of God was announced by a madman entering a marketplace, carrying a lantern in the morning light, in Nietzsche's book "The Gay Science," published in 1882. The moment

DAVID HUGHES


Heaven
Where has GOD GONE?
HELL:

Reading should be an act of self-creation, Nietzsche felt. Can he be held responsible for the ways he has been read?

for such an announcement was already late: Darwin had published "On the Origin of Species" in 1859, and even that pivotal work had only given the imprimatur of science to a rationalist culture that had been predicting God's demise for decades. Nietzsche's announcement was far less remarkable than the shattering drama with which it was made, and the fact that a man so clearly imbued with faith was making it.

Born in rural Prussia in 1844, Nietzsche was the son and grandson of Lutheran pastors, and as a child he was so pious that he was called "the little pastor" himself. His adored father died before his fifth birthday—of a mental illness diagnosed as "softening of the brain," suggesting untold harrowing scenes—and his two-year-old brother died a short while afterward. The young Nietzsche's anguish and fear may be measured by a dream that, as an adolescent, he claimed he'd had the night before his brother's death, a dream in which a funeral organ boomed deafeningly as his father rose up from the grave, hurried into a church, and carried a small child back to the grave in his arms; it was only when the earth had closed over them both, Nietzsche recalled, that the dreadful music stopped, and he awoke. An uneasy survivor and the only man of the house, Nietzsche grew up in a tight circle of devout women—mother, sister, grandmother, two maiden aunts—and was subject to a more than usually personal ideal of God the Father.

It was not until he was twenty and away at the University of Bonn, in 1865, that he read David Friedrich Strauss's influential study "The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined," a historical analysis of the New Testament that systematically destroyed any shred of credibility in the miraculous aspects of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. When Nietzsche came home that Easter, he made his mother cry by refusing to take Communion. For him, however, the refusal marked a spiritual transformation rather than a desolating break: if one set of beliefs was fading, there were others to take its place.

Throughout the preceding century, as the tenets of Christianity grew harder to maintain, contemporary Germans had begun to practice their own new religion of Greek art and myth. New gods meant, above all, new human ideals to be worshipped. The residents of Olympus had initially been revived and reinvigorated by a Prussian cobbler's son, Johann Winckelmann, who had taught himself to pray in Homeric quotations and founded the discipline of classical art history without ever setting foot in Greece. It was from the realm of imaginative desire that Winckelmann drew the ideals of sunny health and nakedly uninhibited joyousness which "ancient Greeks" held out for generations of German thinkers oppressed by cold weather, bourgeois morality, and heavy woollen clothing.

Nietzsche's education in classics had been rigorous, and his conversion was soon complete; he was appointed professor of classical philology at the University of Basel at the age of twenty-four. Yet for all his aptitude he was hardly a natural academic, and debilitating headaches enforced the habits of a destined, if unwilling, recluse. His few friendships with schoolmates and colleagues were almost erotically intense, but even the closest were thwarted by his inability to adapt to the vicissitudes of ordinary life: changing tastes, emotional competition, the troubling tendency of the clever men he knew to acquire dullish wives. In his life almost as much as in his work, he quickly set himself apart.

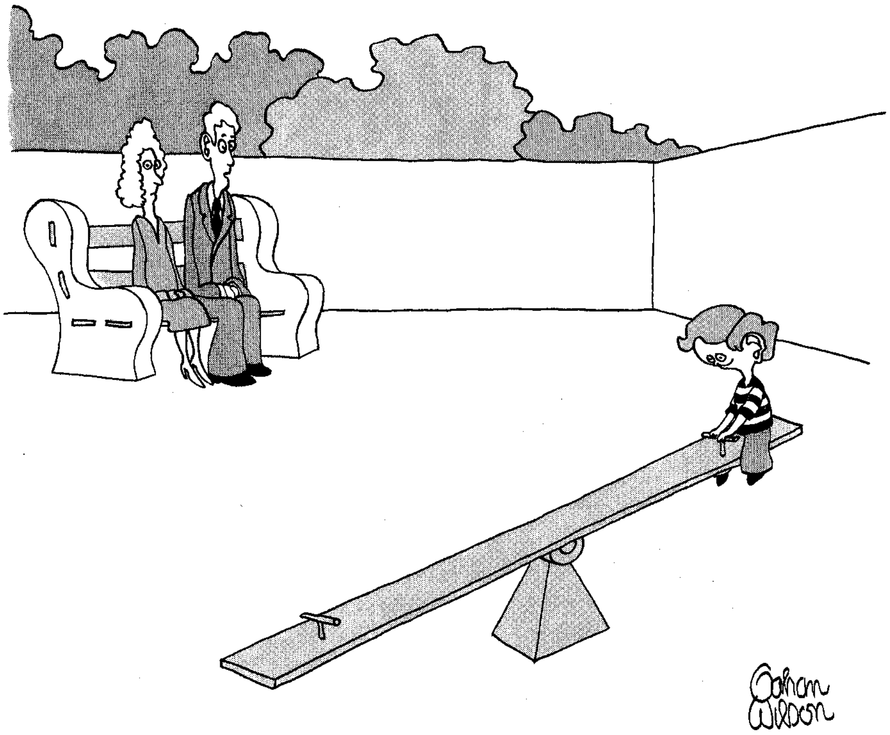
Even as a young professor, Nietzsche, like all great Romantic Hellenists—Byron, Hölderlin, Winckelmann himself—pursued the Greek ideal less for its archeological interest than as a critique of the present and a dream for the future. He scorned the prevailing view of Greek "sweetness and light" (as Matthew Arnold, rather nauseatingly, translated Winckelmann)—what individual, what culture, has known unadulterated ease and happiness?—yet his own dark view was no less a rebuke to the detested bourgeoisie. The most audacious aspect of Nietzsche's Hellenism, however, was his conviction that the highest achievement of the Greeks was within immediate grasp, and had been reborn in the work of a god of his personal acquaintance: Richard Wagner.

Music was a surprising answer to the question of Greek renewal. After decades of artists drawing headless marble torsos in the vain hope of receiving the antique spark, how was an art that had left almost no trace supposed to coax the Muses back? Nietzsche was himself an amateur pianist and composer: the kind of worshipful outsider for whom music seemed, as Safranski notes, the "authentic reality and colossal power," far beyond anything that mere life could offer. In 1865, Nietzsche came across a volume by Schopenhauer in a secondhand shop and discovered that music *is*, philosophically, the authentic reality—not an ornament to life but life itself, released like a spirit from the body and hanging pure and exposed in the vibrating air. At a concert in 1868, he heard the overtures to "Die Meistersinger" and "Tristan und Isolde" and felt that he had looked the spirit in the face. Later that year, his enthusiasm won him an invitation to meet Wagner, who quickly saw that the young professor's abilities might be used to glorify his work. (Schopenhauer, to whom Wagner had sent a libretto of "Der Ring des Nibelungen," stubbornly continued to hear the spirit only when listening to Mozart and Rossini.) Over the next four years, Nietzsche was a guest of the Wagners at their villa in Switzerland two dozen times. For Nietzsche, the older man seemed to offer everything that had been missing from his life: a father, a god, and eventually a place to worship—the new theatre being planned for Bayreuth. With his wife, Cosima, and their precocious son, Siegfried, Wagner also offered Nietzsche a home in which he felt that he spiritually belonged; the beloved disciple even had his own room.

The result was "The Birth of Tragedy," published in 1872, a book that redefined the creative impulse itself: art, Nietzsche wrote, was passionate suffering reshaped by craft. Using myth to stand for human drives and needs, much as Freud would later do, Nietzsche wrote that passion and suffering derived from Dionysus, god of wine and sensuality and the dark unconscious states that these inspired; the ability to give these feelings form was a gift of Apollo, god of cool white marble sculpture, clean lines, and willed illusion. In a culture that held out no promises beyond death, Dionysus offered access to the truth of our existence; Apollo suggested how one might find a way to bear it.

Elaborating on a single line in Aristotle's "Poetics," Nietzsche proposed that the theatre of Aeschylus and Sophocles had originated in the wild, orgiastic rites of Dionysus, the memory of which was preserved, in earliest times, by a chorus performing alone. By means of chant and song and rhythmic frenzy, the audience was transported to a state of religious ecstasy. Wholeness, a sense of merging into the mass of humankind, "each person not only united, reconciled, and blended with another," Nietzsche wrote, "but altogether fused": these feelings remained after the first speaking actors had emerged to tell their stories, and they remained when the stories ended, as they inevitably did, in annihilation. The experience of music, continuing in the chorus, made the tragic end of every life endurable, by drawing every individual into the current of life which flows through and beyond the single, finite self. Twenty-three hundred years after the end of the epoch of Greek tragic theatre, Nietzsche wrote of the experience as though it were his own. And it was. His description, part sensual rapture and part spiritual consolation, was exactly parallel to his description of hearing the music of Wagner, which he discussed with equal fervor in the final sections of his book.

The reaction was outrage. All rhapsody and no footnotes, "The Birth of Tragedy" was about as scholarly as a Dionysian rite, and one critic suggested that the author was free to gather tigers and panthers at his knees but that he should leave German students alone. Nietzsche's classes were, in fact, soon nearly deserted. He was twenty-seven at the time of publication, and he later described this first effort as having been "constructed from a lot of immature, overgreen personal experiences." Safranski, however, places "The Birth of Tragedy" at the core of Nietzsche's work, emphasizing not only his ties to music but the broad and dangerous ties between the worship of art and the fear of democratic politics, or even of social progress—an area in which Safranski balances insights into the subtleties of Nietzsche's thought against an unswerving condemnation of its implications.



"Apparently, Philip and his imaginary playmate are more or less the same weight and size."

Safranski has previously honed his analytic skills in a richly imagined biography of Schopenhauer and a dispassionate study of Heidegger. He is most impressive when following an argument from side to side, and here he works conscientiously down to the substrata, until Nietzsche's apparently blithe praise of Greek slavery, for example, is revealed to be a result not merely of willful aesthetic priorities (or of the pleasure of shocking us) but of his recognition that the price an advanced civilization demands in sweat had hardly changed since ancient times, although it went by sweeter names; and there was nothing Nietzsche hated more than sweeter names. Add the fact that he believed a work of art to be worth any amount of sweat, and that art was actually enriched by taking the guilt of its inevitable social cost into account, and the argument comes around to the point where cruelty and honesty stand staring face to face.

But perhaps the cruellest detail in Safranski's account of Nietzsche relates to the figure of Socrates, whom Nietzsche famously accused, in "The Birth of Tragedy," of single-handedly destroying the reign of tragic art in order to cultivate reason; it was through the influence of Socrates, of course, that Plato banned all poets from the republic. Safranski reveals that in an earlier manuscript for a public lecture Nietzsche openly identified such aesthetically destructive "Socratism" with "the current Jewish press," which Wagner believed stood in his way. Safranski's inclusion of this incident seems misleading, and almost unjust, in a book that discusses Nietzsche's emphatic aversion to anti-Semitism only in two pages toward the end. Yet perhaps no other detail of Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner suggests how far Nietzsche was willing to debase himself for the sake of the musical ecstasy he described, and how hard it must have been, finally, to let it go.

Few could have lived up to Nietzsche's expectations of his idol, but Wagner proved to be a particularly brutal disappointment. His pettiness, his unremitting anti-Semitism, and the pomp and pretension of Bayreuth—which turned out to be not the redemption of a vulgar era, as Nietzsche had hoped, but its epitome—all contributed to the eventual break. There were certain early signs of disaffection: sudden desperate maladies would force Nietzsche to cancel scheduled visits, and once, in 1874, he brought along a score by Brahms—no more deliberate provocation can be imagined—which he performed for the Wagners with what can only have been malicious glee. ("Richard gets quite angry," Cosima Wagner noted in her journal.) And then, in 1878, Nietzsche published "Human, All Too Human," a seriously witty book à la Voltaire in which he declared the French to be the true heirs of the Greeks and music to be, in and of itself, without meaning. Only the long association between music and poetry had taught us to connect feelings with sounds, he wrote; music is ourselves reflected, and nothing more. ("Evil has triumphed here," Cosima wrote this time.) With the book's appearance, the relationship was essentially over. Safranski astutely notes that all of Nietzsche's subsequent philosophy "was an endeavor to cling to life even when the music stopped." Yet Nietzsche's worship of Wagner's genius was never more than a spiritual detour, a replication in sound of the transcendent faith that he had lost: a last communion. And all gods had to die if man was ever to be free.

"Individuals and generations can now fix their eyes on tasks of a vastness that would to earlier ages have seemed madness and a trifling with Heaven and Hell. We may experiment with ourselves!" Nietzsche wrote this edict of dizzying freedom while living in Genoa in 1880, a year after ill health had forced him to quit his professorship and retire on a minimal pension. Released from the burden of teaching, he travelled in search of comfort for a devastating array of symptoms: migraines that went on for days, eye pain, semi-blindness, stomach cramps, vomiting blood—symptoms that seem to have combined the psychosomatic with what are generally assumed to be the developing stages of syphilis. In between bouts of pain, however, he was in the giddy high spirits of a man newly sprung from a prison of thought. "The Gay Science," begun the following year, is a jubilant book, in spite of the ferocious accusation of the madman in the marketplace, who tells a laughing, careless crowd that he has been looking everywhere for God:

> "Where has God gone?" he cried. "I shall tell you. We have killed him—you and I. We are all his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? . . . Has it not become colder? Is more and more night not coming on all the time? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning?"

It is the crowd's own loss of belief that has resulted in the crime that Nietzsche, even in the sickening thrill of liberation, calls the murder of the "holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet possessed." But the murderers only stare in blank astonishment at this terrifying speech; God has been killed with the scalpels of rationalism and science, and these complacent fools do not yet realize that they have lost the moral basis of their lives. Without the rewards of Heaven or the threats of Hell, without divine example and guidance, what would man not be free to do? Of course, many earlier philosophers and poets and novelists, from Kant to Dostoyevsky to George Eliot, had understood full well this chilling logic, and had sought to forestall the moral consequences of the age's great collapse of faith. (Emily Dickinson fit both the problem and the only known solution into four lines: "The abdication of Belief / Makes the Behavior small— / Better an ignis fatuus / Than no illume at all.") But what made Nietzsche so radically different from these figures was his reckless welcome of the newly configured universe, the bold beauty of his call to fellow "aeronauts of the spirit" to soar into the suddenly open distance, where the horizon had been wiped away.

For the rest of his thinking life, Nietzsche strove to sustain belief in the possibility of the flight; that is, in a new future for humanity. He derided the cowardice of the "little bluestocking" George Eliot, who had forsaken the Christian church but who nevertheless insisted—typical of the English!—that Christian morality must be preserved for the sake of society. But why should a society based on lies be protected? Why can't we live with the truth? After the worldly convulsions that man's understanding of his new rights and dominion would bring—events that took no certain shape in Nietzsche's mind—a new type of being would emerge, he announced, as superior to men today as men are to apes. Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, that Frankenstein's monster of the twentieth century, is never physically described, apart from possessing the robust good health that his creator coveted. He was meant to be, simply, the man who was able to live without religious solace, supported by faith in himself alone.

In "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," the prophet descends from his mountain retreat to awaken the world to its new salvation. Nietzsche probably would have written a similar book if he hadn't fallen in love with Lou von Salomé in the spring of 1882. It might not have been so angry, so tortured, so furiously lonely. But it would have been, just the same, the declaration of a new religion—the kind, as Salomé confided to a friend that summer, that "recruits heroes as its disciples." Nietzsche clearly meant her to be the first.

Twenty-one years old, beautiful, and brilliant, Salomé was—like Nietzsche himself, at thirty-seven—a rather innocent self-declared immoralist. Nietzsche was introduced to her by his closest friend, Paul Rée, at St. Peter's in Rome. They spent a few idyllic days travelling together in Italy, taking mountain walks and talking about God. This was enough time for Nietzsche to propose, and he did so again before breaking off the relationship later that year, as a result of his jealous sister's malicious interference. Sick with rage, he had become convinced that Salomé had emotionally betrayed him—with Rée, with whom he also broke. "If I cannot perform the alchemist's trick of turning this filth into gold," he wrote in December, "I am lost." The following month, he began "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," the book that helped set the world to war. He called it "a bulwark against the unendurable."

How much does the life affect the work? The ancient knot is particularly difficult to untie in the case of Nietzsche, who claimed that every philosophy is "a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary unconscious memoir." The impetus that suffering gives to genius—that great, derided romantic cliché—seems to have been the personal confession and unconscious memoir in Nietzsche's own work, from the very beginning. But everyone suffers; genius remains the mystery. How much does it matter to "The Gay Science" that Nietzsche's father's death so devastatingly preceded God's? To "The Birth of Tragedy" that Wagner and Nietzsche's father were born in the same year? Or that his childhood nightmare was filled with deafening music? Safranski introduces another possible source of suffering, which raises questions of its own, in his forthright reference to Nietzsche's "latent homosexuality."

The subject is not new. Although evidence of Nietzsche's homosexuality has been strenuously disputed by earlier biographers, many have speculated on the nature of his attachment to Salomé, since neither seemed to manifest any overt erotic interest in the other. Rumors existed in Nietzsche's own lifetime, and the Nietzsche-obsessed circle around Freud considered Nietzsche's homosexuality common knowledge. Freud reported having heard from Jung, whose uncle was a physician in the clinic in which Nietzsche was confined after his final collapse, that Nietzsche confessed to having been infected with syphilis while visiting a homosexual brothel, although Freud warned that neither the story nor Nietzsche's state of mind was to be trusted. (At the time, Nietzsche was also claiming to be Christ and Dionysus and Cosima Wagner's husband.) Freud, who believed that Nietzsche achieved greater introspective insight than anyone ever known, nevertheless concluded that he could not be analyzed because he remained a sexual mystery. This staggering contradiction, coming from the master theorist of the sexual roots of the inner life, may at least suggest one reason for the circling evasions that have made Nietzsche so impossible to pin down; it may suggest a reason, too, for the tragic sense that only darkened as he grew older, in response to the utter loneliness that overtook his life.

Perhaps, after all, he had really been in love with Rée, and loving Salomé—as at times he'd given the impression of loving Cosima Wagner—was his only means of expressing his desire. "The degree and kind of a man's sexuality," Nietzsche wrote not long after these events, "reaches up into the topmost summit of his spirit." When considering his own spirit, was this most introspectively insightful man deceiving or deceived? We may never know, but whatever Salomé meant to Nietzsche as a woman, as an intellectual and spiritual companion she seems to have been his last chance to believe that he might not spend his life alone. The sonorous figure of Zarathustra, forty-year-old sage and teacher, does a great deal of talking to himself: "comforting his heart with hard maxims," as Nietzsche puts it, "for his heart was sore as never before."

It is an incredible fact that these "hard maxims"—directives to the self to have courage, seek out the enemy, obtain victory, and love the war—were taken as literal directives by whole nations. "Zarathustra" is written in a uniquely mannered combination of Biblical oratory and playfulness: St. Paul meets Lewis Carroll. Today, it is hard to imagine that Nietzsche meant anything in it literally, including the notion of war. He took delight in exaggerating his own military experience: he had actually completed a year of peacetime service, and during the Franco-Prussian War he had spent two weeks at the front, nursing wounded soldiers, before being sent home with diphtheria and dysentery; Cosima Wagner had warned that he would do more good if he sent cigars. But in "Zarathustra" war is a personal matter: a cry for bravery in defeat of inner weakness, delivered with the wild bravado of a man who felt that no one was listening, even though he proposed to save the human race from consuming aimlessness and despair.

Jesus had died too young. Had he lived to maturity, Nietzsche argued in "Zarathustra," he would have outgrown his contempt for the earth and the body, his hunger for transcendence, and settled down. Throughout the rest of his work, Nietzsche catalogued the damage done to man by the immature demands of Christianity, and devised ways that a riper faith might take its place. One doctrine, above all, promised to make this possible. The central tenet of Nietzsche's religion of heroes, the idea that had hit him as the light had hit St. Paul, was the "eternal recurrence": understand it, he wrote, believe it, and you will change your life.

Few have understood it; fewer have believed it, and for good reason. What would you think, Nietzsche asks, if a demon were to creep after you and say: Every day that you have lived, every moment, has been inscribed in time in such a way that it will recur, over and over, in an endless cycle, with no change possible and no way out. For Nietz-

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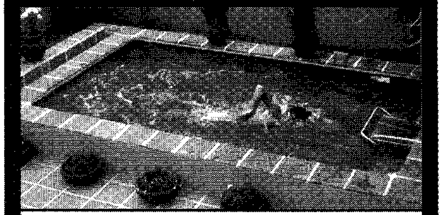

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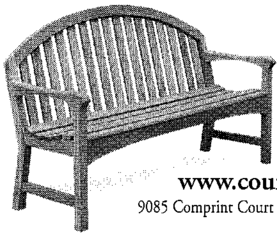

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sche himself, regarding his own life, the thought was an agony of pain and regret and shame. To have to listen to his mother and sister again! Who could bear those unbearable others; worse, who could bear oneself? Only a person who had lived an extraordinarily noble and healthy life, he answered—only an *Übermensch*, understood as one who overcomes the rancor and resentments that lead us to squander our days. Part child of Darwin and part mystic, Nietzsche searched for mathematical proof that time and space might actually intersect to make the "eternal recurrence" possible. The concept is, as Nietzsche well knew, as fantastical as that of a Heaven we have never seen. And yet if men were to believe even in its possibility—as in the celestial kingdom—they would strive to make the demon's curse a source of joy: the "eternal recurrence" was so crucial to Nietzsche because it was designed to create just those superior beings who would greet it happily, and who would replace ideals of Heaven with ideals of earth.

It would be a very different sort of earth, no longer the province of the priests. It was through their influence, Nietzsche railed, that man had become a sickly animal, trapped in a civilization that sapped his sex and strength; the time had come for man to reclaim his instincts and redeem his rights. Do not believe what almost two thousand years of history have taught you to call evil, he counselled, nor what you have been assured are virtues—humility, meekness, poverty, altruism—because these concepts have been purposefully reversed. The Greeks knew better: goodness for them was nobility, pride, victory, power. The overturning of these values was the work of a brilliant people enslaved: a people who had lost all worldly power and had managed to convince the world—astonishing feat!—that power itself and the desire for power were evil, that everything a slave could not attain was not worth attaining, that the meek would inherit the earth. It was the Jews who had perpetrated this extraordinary scheme, by inventing Christianity.

Nietzsche was furious when some of his ideas caused the rising anti-Semitic press to take him for a supporter. After his break with Wagner, he was consistently outspoken in his praise of contemporary Jewry ("the strongest, toughest, and purest race now living in Europe") and in his belief in the benefits of mixing races and of Jewish assimilation in Germany—the benefits to Germans. In "Beyond Good and Evil" (1886), he wrote that, rather than expel the Jews, "it might be useful and fair to expel the anti-Semitic screamers from the country." He was anything but a nationalist; by the turn of the century, his ideal of a citizenry of "good Europeans," transcending all origins, was attracting adherents—among them many Jews—eager to escape the shackles of history and forge their own fates. Nietzsche himself, upon leaving his professorship in Basel, could not bear to go back to Germany; after nearly a decade of travels he returned home only as a blasted, empty shell, when his mother took him out of the clinic, in 1890, offering her gratitude "to our dear, good God that I can now care for this child of my heart."

From his mother's abdication of control, in 1895, up through the rise of National Socialism, Nietzsche's estate—his books, papers, unpublished writings—was owned by his sister Elisabeth, as unsavory and unscrupulous a character as ever impinged on literary history. A particularly vicious anti-Semite ("There can be no reconciliation between a vindictive anti-Semitic goose and me," Nietzsche wrote after an argument with her in 1884), she was responsible for holding back some of her brother's works (including the letter just quoted) and reëditing others, for publishing his scattered notes in an arrangement titled "The Will to Power"—once something of a Nazi sourcebook, now officially returned to the status of scattered notes—and, finally, for welcoming Hitler to the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar in 1934. (The Führer stopped by on his way to Bayreuth.) It is easy and in many ways correct to place the blame for the "Nazification" of Nietzsche's work on her shoulders; she would have been proud to bear it.

Yet the issue of Nietzsche's responsibility isn't quite so easy. Many of the terms he used, from "power" to "the good," are accorded different meanings at different times. And blaming the Jews for anything—even the invention of a moral system widely thought to be mankind's highest accomplishment—was a danger he had to recognize. But then danger was his literary atmosphere, as provocation was his method. The grotesquely troublesome issue of the "will to power," for which Safranski and many others continue to stand in ranks against him, might have been understood quite differently had Nietzsche used an alternative term, like "instinct for freedom," which, as he explains at one point, indicates exactly the same psychological drive. But, as with his statements on Greek slavery, Nietzsche would not permit himself an easier, more digestible term, maybe because he grew up in a society in which swallowing just those sorts of terms had made him sick.

Perhaps the most important question about the influence of the life on the work is how much Nietzsche's ideas may be understood—rather like Freud's—as a response not only to the universal condition but to the specific, extraordinarily repressed conditions of his era. Many critics have complained that Nietzsche offered no new values to put in place of those that he aimed to destroy. Yet it could be argued that his master plan to spring the cultural trap and release the darker instincts—aggression, sex, power—would have not only lent these instincts honest shapes but restored the virtues that had been so long debased by the pretenses of bourgeois life. It is from the most powerful, and those most capable of evil, that Zarathustra demands, "I want the good from you." It is their strength that makes their goodness valuable, because it is freely chosen.

Can goodness, in fact, arise from strength? Would it exist without coercion? This is the experiment from which generations of humanists have backed away; for Nietzsche, however, there was no goodness otherwise. Perhaps he offered no other values because he wanted no others; his task was to scald, scrape, and purify until the good ran true. "The genius of the heart," Nietzsche wrote in "Beyond Good and Evil," "divines the hidden and forgotten treasure, the drop of goodness and sweet spirituality under thick and opaque ice." Nietzsche was, in a sense, killing morality in order to save it.

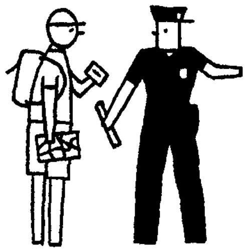
Safranski, after damning Nietzsche's philosophy of power, calls the man himself a "genius of the heart"—referring to the forgiving, compassionate conduct of his life and the content of his letters, so at odds with the blazing persona of the work. ("Pity," Nietzsche writes piteously, "has always been the major source of problems in my life," and he goes on to lament "a soft spot that would have made any magnanimous Greek burst into laughter.") In fact, Nietzsche confessed to feeling terror at the idea of compassion—a terror of being swamped by the suffering the world contained. At the end, in the Dostoyevskian scene in which he collapsed while trying to protect a horse, this is precisely what seems to have occurred. Despite the unceasing onslaught that the would-be warrior made on his moral constitution, it would not yield. Perhaps Nietzsche's fatal error, historically speaking, was his assumption that the morality of the civilization that he assaulted was equally indestructible. "Unfortunately," Nietzsche complained of his epoch while looking into his own heart, "man is no longer evil enough."

He did not live to learn otherwise. Those who carried Nietzsche's inheritance into the twentieth century have offered radically different responses to the revelation that man could bring the walls and towers of civilization crashing down. Freud, who through decades of work had recounted the psychological costs to individuals made sick by the cultural inhibition of powerful instincts, announced in 1930, in "Civilization and Its Discontents," that the price was more than fair. Writing from a vantage point that feels like the very cliff edge from which Nietzsche soared and fell, Freud faced the future and warned that our civilization, however imperfect, represented nothing less than "the struggle for life of the human species," and that this struggle might soon be lost. Three years later, Heidegger publicly greeted the triumph of Hitler's party, citing Nietzsche—"the last German philosopher to passionately seek God"—as an authority for God's death and for the welcome transformation at which the German nation then stood poised. Heidegger, who was neither to repent nor recant his early Nazi fervor, eventually altered his theological position in one regard. In an interview that he gave long after the war but ordered withheld from publication until his death, he announced that philosophy, after Nietzsche, could offer neither hope nor help for mankind's future. All we can do, he told a startled journalist, is to wait for a god to reappear. "Only a god," he said, "can save us now." ◆

BRIEFLY NOTED

Notable American Women, *by Ben Marcus (Vintage; $12.50).* This deadpan dystopian novel documents the upbringing of a man who has been conditioned to have no emotions. In an alternate reality dominated by radical, powerful women known as the Silentists, the hero is subjected to laborious behavioral regimens including a regular "language fast," the elaborate "Thompson Food Scheme," and frequent swims in the "learning pond." But, with the heightened sensitivity of the dispossessed, he can't stop identifying the ways that life could be richer, and the result is like an anthropologist on hallucinogens. "I should be able to breathe without the sky suffering from lack of birds," he ruefully tells us. Although the novel's philosophical aims are at times frustratingly obscure, this "collision between satire and sadness," as the author has called it, is a dizzying reimagination of our relationship to language. If we're not at the epicenter of that collision, we're close enough so that the aftershock rattles our teeth.

Where You Find It, *by Janice Galloway (Simon & Schuster; $24).* The twenty stories in this unsettling, beautifully written collection take place in and around Glasgow, and the protagonists are mainly imperfectly loved girls and women. Galloway is particularly interested in moments of apprehension, times when a niggling intimation of something slightly out of kilter turns into really bad news (in one grimly hilarious vignette, "He Dreams of Pleasing His Mother," a man imagines his mother bearing down on him in a truck). In fact, Galloway's powers of observation are often so acute that the reader's impulse is to turn away.



Achilles, *by Elizabeth Cook (Picador; $16).* This forceful re-creation of the life of Achilles sacrifices nothing to modernity: gods mate violently with mortals, ghosts feast on sheep's blood, and Achilles rages and slays, unburdened by psychology. At the same time, this brief, intense novel is unmistakably modern in intent, turning a war epic into a meditation on the limits of human perfectibility. Fragments of keen, almost carnal prose have the cumulative effect of a requiem: in Hades, the dead resent the living, who are always eating, "their tongues fossicking among the bones"; on the battlefield, Achilles greets Hector with the words "We meet as animals," and his enemy sees "his life spread out before him like a giant sheet in the sun."

Edinburgh, *by Alexander Chee (Welcome Rain; $25).* When the director of a boys' choir in Maine molests his young charges, the damage he inflicts spirals outward in ever larger circles. The novel's hero, Fee, a Korean-American teen-ager, is unable to separate what has been done to him from his own budding desire for a fellow-choirboy, and is thus unable to save his friend from the same fate. Years later, as a high-school teacher, Fee discovers that the choir director's son is one of his students. Chee has chosen difficult territory for his first novel, but by balancing its anguish with fantasy and Korean folk tales, he keeps a sad story from becoming maudlin.

The Eyre Affair, *by Jasper Fforde (Viking; $23.95).* It's 1985 in England, at least on the calendar; the Crimean War is in its hundred-and-thirty-first year; time travel is nothing new; Japanese tourists slip in and out of Victorian novels; and the literary branch of the special police, led gamely by the beguiling Thursday Next, are pursuing Acheron Hades, who has stolen the manuscript of "Martin Chuzzlewit" and set his sights on kidnapping the character Jane Eyre, a theft that could have disastrous consequences for Brontë lovers who like their story straight. This rambunctious caper could be taken as a warning about what might happen if society considered literature really important—like, say, energy futures or accounting.

BOOKS

WASHINGTON WIZARD

The capital crime novels of George P. Pelecanos.

BY BEN GREENMAN

Someone, maybe me, should publish a Hollywood-homes-of-the-stars-type map of America's premier crime novelists, complete with oval-shaped portraits of the authors displayed above the areas they chronicle. James Ellroy and Walter Mosley would preside over Los Angeles. Jon A. Jackson would occupy Detroit. Miami would be crowded, with James W. Hall, Carl Hiaasen, Edna Buchanan, and perhaps even a small black-and-white of Charles Willeford, for old times' sake. And somewhere over Washington, D.C., there would be a large picture of George P. Pelecanos.

"Hell to Pay" (Little, Brown; $24.95) is his tenth crime novel in the past decade, and, like the rest, it's set in and around the District. But Pelecanos's Washington has little to do with murder on the Mall or dirty deeds in Foggy Bottom. It is a rough patch of urban real estate populated by guttersnipes, snitches, dealers, and rapists—and by plenty of decent and hardworking citizens who have to stand by and watch as their neighborhoods go to hell.

Most of those citizens are African-American, like most of Washington. Many others are Greek-American, like Pelecanos. In the first phase of Pelecanos's career, back in the early nineties, the Greek community dominated his books; the early novels focussed on a young Greek-American detective named Nick Stefanos, who attempted to solve small-time crimes as he coped with alcoholism and other forms of substance abuse. Written in the first person, with evident debts to the Big Three of American detective literature (Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald), the Stefanos novels were critical successes, and showed much of Pelecanos's sensibility already in place. For example, Pelecanos wasn't interested in having his hero work exclusively as a P.I.; Nick developed his interest in snooping while laboring as a cut-and-paste adman for a chain of local electronics stores. This was realism, but also autobiography; Pelecanos himself had a long blue-collar résumé before he published his début novel, at the age of thirty-five, having worked as a short-order cook, dishwasher, bartender, appliance-store clerk, and shoe salesman. All these occupations surface in his plots.

George P. Pelecanos

ROBERT RISKO

After a brief foray into more straightforward pulp fiction, Pelecanos published "The Big Blowdown" (1996), an ambitious and layered mystery set in the nineteen-forties and fifties. (It made a hardboiled hero out of Nick Stefanos's grandfather.) "The Big Blowdown," which won several international crime-fiction prizes, was a bona-fide historical novel. It reënergized Pelecanos, sharpening his archivist's eye and allowing him to focus on the sociological shifts that remade D.C. over the decades. His next book, "King Suckerman" (1997), was his masterstroke: a revved-up, flashy tribute to the big-Afro seventies. Set during the Bicentennial summer of 1976, it introduced two new heroes, Marcus Clay, a black Vietnam vet who owned a record store in inner-city D.C., and Dimitri Karras, a Greek-American friend of Marcus's who, like Nick Stefanos, had problems controlling his addictions. "King Suckerman" looked at D.C. from the roots up, with lovingly nostalgic scenes of playground basketball and late-night driving shattered by episodes of violent bloodletting. Pelecanos wasn't as hilariously deadpan as Elmore Leonard or as dourly intense as Dennis Lehane, but his characters, even the villains, were motivated by a mixture of self-interest and existential despair which made the battle between good and evil unusually compelling. It also allied him more with authors like James Crumley, Pete Dexter, and the early Richard Ford than with traditional thriller writers. Despite the shotgun-toting baddies and the latticework of double crosses, Pelecanos was writing entirely satisfying adult novels that also happened to be brisk beach reads.

Marcus and Dimitri stayed on for two more tours, moving through the cokehead eighties in "The Sweet Forever" (which was keyed to the drug overdose of the University of Maryland basketball star Len Bias following the 1986 N.B.A. draft) and the bleak nineties in "Shame the Devil" (in which Karras, having found some domestic happiness, loses it when his five-year-old son is killed in a holdup). But the closer Karras and Clay got to the present, the less vibrant they became. Marcus, always the more stable of the two, had mastered most of his demons, and Dimitri's fragility had ceased to pay dividends.

Pelecanos created a new pair of detectives for "Right as Rain," his ninth novel, which came out last year. Derek Strange was a black ex-cop in his mid-fifties who had carved out a nice little living as a private investigator; Terry Quinn, about twenty years younger than Strange, was also an ex-cop, who had left the force after mistakenly shooting a fellow-officer. At first, Strange and Quinn played like slight returns of Clay and Karras: the white guy was damaged goods who managed to come through in the clutch; the black guy was a pillar of strength shaken by the destruction all around him. But in "Hell to Pay," the second Strange-Quinn novel, Pelecanos regains his footing; it is at once more powerful and more agile than its predecessor.

As usual, the novel has urban rot at its core. In one of the two main plots, Strange tries to track down the men responsible for the death of a young football player; in the other, Quinn tries to protect a teen-age prostitute from a menacing customer. The external conflicts are echoed by internal ones: Strange is still ducking off for massage-parlor quickies even as he settles into a romance with his office manager, Janine, and Quinn is still coming to terms with the shooting that ended his police career. But the darkness of the previous two books has lifted somewhat. In the opening scene, two dealers wait in a car before a dogfight:

> Garfield Potter sat low behind the wheel of an idling Caprice, his thumb stroking the rubber grip of the Colt revolver loosely fitted between his legs. On the bench beside him, leaning against the passenger window, sat Carlton Little. Little filled an empty White Owl wrapper with marijuana and tamped the herb with his thumb. Potter and Little were waiting on Charles White, who was in the backyard of his grandmother's place, getting his dog out of a cage.

The prose is telegraphic: a scaffolding of nouns and verbs, a few load-bearing adverbs, and a near-absence of adjectival frippery. Within three sentences, we have the car, the gun, and the cigar wrapper used for rolling paper: the paragraph has the feel of a police report. And though it's the kind of mentholated prose you might expect to wear out its welcome, it holds up well over the course of the story.

In the classic crime novel, characters are defined by their speech, which can be terse (Jim Thompson, whose dialogue was so brittle it snapped) or self-consciously slangy (Hammett). In Pelecanos, listening is just as important as talking. Especially since "King Suckerman," which bounced along on a cushion of mid-seventies funk and soul, Pelecanos has seen the world through the prism of pop music; for his characters, the ears rather than the eyes are the windows to the soul. In "Hell to Pay," the dealers in the opening scene are listening to "the new DMX joint on PGC," gangsta rap on a D.C. radio station, complete with actual call letters. They're not the only ones marked by their musical tastes. Strange drives around with Teddy Pendergrass crooning on his car stereo, and when it's not Teddy Pendergrass it's Al Green or War. Ron Lattimer, Strange's research assistant, surfs the Net while "some kind of jazz-inflected hip-hop" percolates through his high-end Bose minisystem. And Quinn's romance with a female investigator is consummated to the boozy folk-rock of Shane MacGowan. This may be a predictable sort of cultural accessorizing, but it's surprisingly effective as shorthand, and it leaves Pelecanos room for an occasional bright surprise—at home, for example, Strange likes to put up his feet and lose himself in Ennio Morricone.

In fact, the characters' musical selections function almost like personal soundtracks, and they raise the question of why none of these books have hit the big screen yet. Pelecanos himself, after punching out as a short-order cook and a shoe salesman, started to make inroads into the movie business; in the years before the first Nick Stefanos novel appeared, he began working at Circle Films, a company that produced three early Coen brothers films and brought John Woo's super-violent Hong Kong masterpiece "The Killer" to America. Pelecanos's books never have movies far from their hearts; his characters talk about them as often as they talk about music or sports, and the central plot device of "King Suckerman" is a drive-in screening of a blaxploitation classic which brings all the main characters together for a tense showdown. If there's a movie in "King Suckerman," why isn't there a movie of "King Suckerman"? Somebody should tender offers to George Clooney and Ving Rhames to play Karras and Clay, and get the party started. The soundtrack is already done. ♦

DEPARTMENT OF DON'T CALL US

CALCUTTA—A man in the eastern Indian city of Calcutta who applied for a state government job 34 years ago finally got an interview call, but said on Wednesday he was now too old for a post.

Ravindra Nath Halder, 52 and a grandfather, was just a teenager when he put his name down for work at a state labour exchange office in Marxist-ruled West Bengal.

Halder, a snackshop owner, said he was amazed to get the letter dated March 6 from the labour exchange asking him to come for an interview after so long.

"I'd given up hope. I'd applied in 1968. I'm now 52 and too old for a government job."

From the Harare (Zimbabwe) Financial Gazette.

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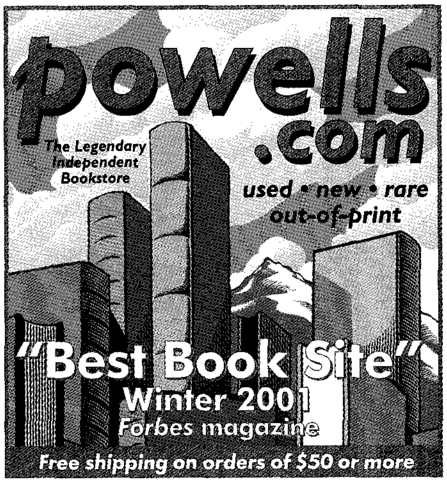

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THE THEATRE

FULL TILT

Robin Williams strikes again.

BY JOHN LAHR

America abounds with comedy clubs, comedy channels, and situation comedies, but the fact is that comedy, as it is practiced on these shores, is generally a tame thing. The unbridled, murky mischief of a genuine madcap doesn't fit within the polite frame of today's media, and though the politically incorrect guff that comes to us over the airwaves may give citizens the illusion of free speech, there is no dangerous or transgressive thrill to it. Even the term for most comedy acts—"standup"—signals the paralysis of the genre. Most of our comedians don't aspire to say the unsayable or to disturb the peace; they just want to get a club gig and a sitcom. To catch sight of an authentic comic, then, is an awe-inspiring thing—like spotting a snow leopard or a Chinese panda.

Coincidentally, a Chinese panda, albeit a bewildered one, found its way into Robin Williams's hundred and five minutes of hilarity last week at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. (He also played the Beacon, Carnegie Hall, and Avery Fisher Hall, before continuing a two-and-a-half-month, twenty-seven-city tour, which will end in Las Vegas on April 27th.) The panda, Ping Pong, was complaining about being forced to mate with a fellow-panda in order for the zoo to fund a new wing. "I would not fuck her," the panda said, speaking its particular brand of low-key Sino-sarcasm. "I would rather lick my balls than fuck her." The panda was only one of about a hundred characters, including several talking appliances, that Williams called out of his perfervid brain in the course of the evening. ("No, Robin, I'm sorry," the refrigerator said, refusing to open its doors to Williams, during a paranoid fantasy in which his appliances dished *him*. "I've talked to the scale and your ass is huge.")

Williams is the ringmaster of his own haunted internal world—a combination of grievance and good times, which the comedian Martin Mull has called "the cesspool of consciousness." The whirlwind of the extraordinary is Williams's natural climate. The atmosphere is bracing; it buoys both Williams and the audience through the rare moments of ordinariness. In the old manic standup days, when his motormouth high-wire act was fuelled by drugs and drink, Williams described it as "George Jessel on acid"; his current, more sober comic turns still cover exhilarating ground, but the quality of the ride is different. Williams likens himself to a racing bike. "Now it's a bike with suspension," he told me. "The suspension is being at the age of fifty."

Although Williams's humor is not directly personal, his self-dramatizing metabolism seems to illustrate a hysterical need not just for attention but for the kind of adoring attention a parent usually provides. Williams, who grew up in luxurious but isolated circumstances in the suburbs of Detroit, situates the origins of his antic spirit somewhere between his fun-loving but apparently self-involved mother, who was a Christian Scientist and thought "everything was wonderful," and his frequently absent, remote industrialist father, who was a pragmatist and thought "everybody's out to nail ya." As Williams explains it, "My comedy steers between rainbows and cesspools."

On the evening I caught up with him, he pirouetted onto the BAM stage in the loose-fitting shirt and pants he favors. "It's nice to be here where Twyla performed," he said, referring to the dancer Twyla Tharp and doing a few arabesques. "A dance to spring, and stopping the war." With a small forest of potted palms behind him, and two gigantic screens above him, Williams stalked past a table, center stage, on whose red tablecloth nine bottles of water and three towels were neatly stacked. His arm went up in a semaphore of royal greeting to the burghers in the box seats above. "Congratulations on that portrait," he said, about the new, notoriously frumpy painting of Queen Elizabeth, immediately getting the audience to play with him. "I

"My comedy steers between rainbows and cesspools," Williams says. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

think Lucian Freud really captured you."

Williams works like a jazz musician taking a solo. The excitement is as much in the improvisation as in the revelation, in the bravura way that he connects the dots—what the director Paul Mazursky calls his "desperate need to be wonderful." As a spectator, you have to hang on tight; there are no signposts for the emotional-intellectual switchbacks, and no rests—the comic ride is full tilt, four on the floor. In fact, the word "comedian" doesn't convey the sense of giddy acceleration in Williams's routine. He is, it seems to me, best understood as a "zany," a term that refers to the amalgamation of two distinctly different commedia-dell'arte figures: a dominating intriguer given to brainstorms, and a knockabout idiot who'll do anything for a laugh.

One minute, in a fantasy of lascivious Olympic figure skating ("the Kama Sutra on ice," he calls it), Williams is lifting his female partner above him, with his hands in her crotch—"She's going, 'Put me down or buy me dinner!' "—and the next he's a sniffer dog moaning to another sniffer dog after a long day of hunting anthrax and cocaine, "I can't taste my ass, I don't know." Inevitably, President Bush encroaches on

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his consciousness. "George almost died from a pretzel—almost took the cab," he says, assuming a voice. "Gilligan's down! Gilligan's down!" He continues, "Even his own dogs don't give a shit. They were licking him for salt." Williams's imagery can liberate even Osama bin Laden from the banality of the current discourse. "We can't find him, but he's a six-foot-five Arab on dialysis," he says. "Call me crazy, but look for a guy connected to his luggage."

Williams ricochets around this jumble of subjects—approaching each with a distinct voice and posture—as if his mind had been turned inside out. Onscreen, a certain self-consciousness sometimes slips into his role playing, and he can be mawkish; onstage, living off his nerve ends and the energy of the audience, he is free and unself-conscious. Instead of performing corporate creations, Williams, whose forty films have grossed more than a billion dollars at the box office, is expressing *himself*, newly minted in the moment, beyond the script, and even beyond self-awareness. "You're in the center of the hurricane," he told me. "It seems like it's going a mile a minute, but you're in control. Then the greatest thing happens if all of a sudden new stuff starts coming. Where'd that stuff come from? Too late. It's going."

Discovery and invention are Williams's twin engines; they drive him, and us, pretty high. Give Williams a subject like the Swiss ("The nicer Germans. The other white race"), and he's already jumped from the Swiss Army to the corkscrew on a Swiss Army knife. "Many of you men have never opened Chardonnay under pressure," he says with mock military gravity, then swings into a Marine drill: "I don't know / But I've been told / Chardonnay must be sipped cold." There's also an inspired colloquy, between Williams and a drunken Glaswegian, on how the Scots invented golf. "I take a little fucked-up stick and whack a ball till it goes in a hole." "Do you do it just once?" "No—eighteen fuckin' times."

But where Williams really cooks is on the issue of turning fifty: "Now your prostate is bigger than your ego." He segues skillfully from the inevitable jokes about colonoscopies and the orthoproctoscope ("a Roto-Rooter with a video camera . . . suddenly your own Discovery Channel") to Viagra and "the dick from hell" with a "ninety-five-minute erection." He interrupts the howls of laughter to say, "I've only one question for you, ladies: Do we look like this?" Duplicated in closeup on the screens above him, Williams puts his hairy forearm across his mouth, his head dips down into the crook of his elbow, his pate begins to judder. The audience screams at this muff-diving mime as, intermittently and with increasing exhaustion, Williams peeks over the top of his arm, first mouthing the words "I love you," then gasping for air, then bug-eyed and slurring, frozen-jawed, and, finally, snoring loudly against his arm.

After this wild and annihilating moment (you can buy a spruced-up version of Williams and his legendary elbow on a T-shirt for thirty dollars, or on a key chain for five), Williams really shouldn't return to the stage. The audience is almost wiped out from laughing. Williams has put us in touch with our darkest secrets, our worst anxieties, and the primacy of our appetites. He's won. But, in comedy as well as onscreen, Williams seems compelled to assert his own humanity. In a hooded windbreaker, he strolls out now to tell a few well-shaped jokes about his kids and the difficulties of being a parent. After he appeared on "Dennis Miller Live," he says, his ten-year-old son told him, "Dad, you have to set limits." Of course, Williams's job description requires that he test boundaries. But, as a man who wants to be both good and great, Williams seems to feel some ambivalence about his licensed immaturity, and this can mute his impact.

I saw him again the following night, this time at the Beacon, where the show was ninety per cent the same. At the end of the evening, however, he began an unformed conversation about the ages of man, his parents' deaths, and Ground Zero. He stopped himself and pulled up the hood of his jacket. "It's not the Grim Reaper; it's the Grim Rapper," he said. Of the doggerel that followed, I remember only one line: "Rejoice yourself in present laughter." It seemed tautological. Even in absurd and evil times, he'd given us a dazzling firsthand experience of what he was now struggling to explain: the sense of joy in being alive. On reflection, maybe what Williams was trying to suggest by smudging his otherwise sharp stage act was that he, as well as the show, was unfinished. Maybe that was the point of his joking to me, over the phone, in an announcer's voice, "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a work in progress." ♦

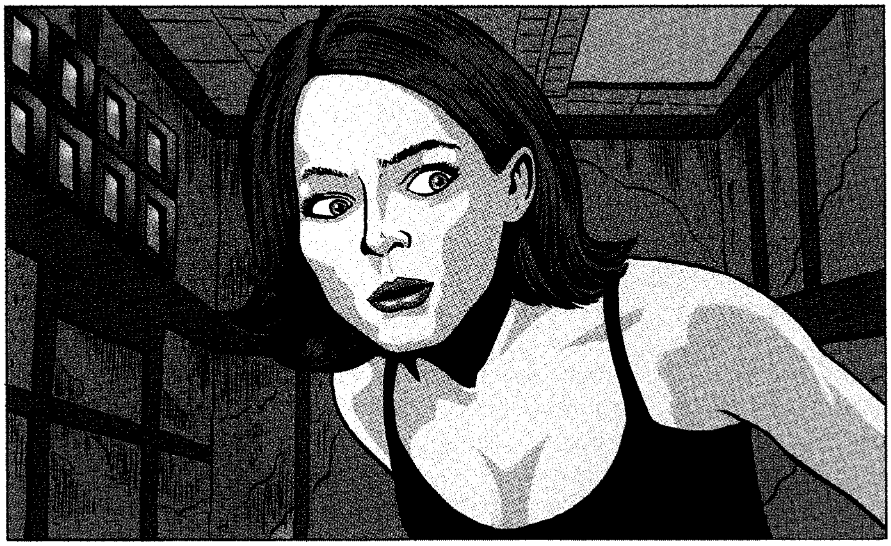
THE CURRENT CINEMA

HOME FIRES

David Fincher's "Panic Room."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The plot of "Panic Room" could not be more simple. It is as simple as waking up in the dark and wondering whether you really heard a noise or whether it fell through a crack in your dreams. Meg Altman (Jodie Foster), newly divorced, moves into a New York brownstone with her daughter, Sarah (Kristen Stewart). Before going to bed on their first night in the house, Meg grapples with the alarm system and gives up. A while later, three men break in from the rain. They are Burnham (Forest Whitaker), Raoul (Dwight Yoakam), and Junior (Jared Leto), and they were not expecting to find anyone there. Meg and Sarah do not interest them; what interests them is a sum of money left there by the previous owner. It lies beneath the floor of a special stronghold built within a wall and concealed behind a mirror: a place with its own food, lighting, toilet, surveillance system, and hard steel skin. Nobody has yet connected the phone. It is here that Meg and Sarah hole up once they realize that danger is upon them; they will not leave their tiny fortress, and the men will not leave until they can get in there and take what they want. The name of this place is the panic room.



Jodie Foster plays a divorced mother having a bad night in a new house.

MARK ZINGARELLI

I have regaled friends with the outline of this picture, and it is much to the credit of its director, David Fincher, that several of them, mostly women, have quailed at the very thought. "No *way* am I going to see that," they say. Of course, that reluctance will aid the movie's cause: millions of people will moan their way through "Panic Room" while disclaiming any wish to be there, partly because everyone at the office will be talking about it, but also because we retain, not just as moviegoers but in other creaking corners of our privacy, an indecipherable need—it lies somewhere between a secret and a boast—to drag ourselves to the edges of our dread. I do not know when this movie was conceived; but the more adventurous directors tend to have timing on their side, and Fincher must know that if he was ever going to make a film about security the moment to do it was now, when insecurity has become as common as migraine, with its paralyzing throb. Even worse, you will not recover from this movie by going to lie

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down in a darkened room, because that, as the story informs you, is precisely where trouble begins.

Fincher is the man who brought us "Se7en" and "Fight Club," the look of which suggested that—unlike, say, Ron Howard—he did not refine his art on the set of "Happy Days." The rules state that a Fincher film should be no more than two and a half watts more luminous than the surrounding auditorium, and "Panic Room" plays along. Much of the action, thanks to the state of the house—unfurnished and echoing, with no pictures yet on the walls—swims by in a thick gray-green light, and my longing for a stiff drink, as the tension stirred, was exceeded only by my urgent need for a set of gills. There is some daylight, at the beginning and the end, but Fincher, who is plainly descended from a line of nocturnal mammals with strong burrowing instincts, signals his disquiet at the brightness in a most peculiar way: the opening credits loom in the New York sky, apparently forged from steel and not pasted flat on the screen but obeying the perspective of the buildings, so that the words "Jodie Foster" float there like a spaceship, or a hangover from Fritz Lang's "Metropolis." We get the sense, instant and irreparable, that Meg is locked into the city—that, from here on, its infrastructure will incorporate her fears.

What becomes clear is that the panic room is only incidentally the refuge in which she is forced to reside. What it really refers to is the interior of Jodie Foster's head. Has there ever been an actress so racked with apprehension about the contents of the coming day, or of the next few minutes? Some of Ingmar Bergman's leading ladies, especially Ingrid Thulin, wore expressions that told us that the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse were currently stabled in their bathrooms, but mid-period Foster makes Thulin look like June Allyson. "Panic Room" puts her in glasses so slim that her eyes seem doubly narrowed in suspicion, to match her tightened mouth; her hair is trimmed and darkened, with a strictly non-cute flip at the back. For most of the film, she wears nightgear—sweatpants and a low-cut top. No other performer could show that much cleavage and give off so relentless a charge of the anti-sexual: a good thing, too, for it robs "Panic Room" of erotic nastiness. The only lust in this film is the lust for money, to have and to hoard.

The strangest sights, by far, are closeups of Foster's face. At one point, she gazes directly at the lens, as if to say, I know this is only a film, guys, but I'm in *trouble* here. Just this once, could you get off your asses and *help*? She looks wary at the start, before the thieves creep in, and she looks freaked out at the finish, as though the defusing of one threat were merely a rehearsal for the next. She is, in short, the Tom Ridge of her own domain. There isn't a line in "Panic Room" that encourages a political reading, but there is something horribly apt in the way Fincher closes the drama in joyless exhaustion, leaving you certain that there will be a sequel to these events, not onscreen but in someone's home, tonight. If Fincher has whetted his skills on the films of anybody else, it has to be the young Roman Polanski, the one who put us through "Repulsion" and "Rosemary's Baby." But Catherine Deneuve and Mia Farrow confronted their terror in apartments; Foster has a whole house to worry about.

She also has her daughter, Sarah—dry, diabetic, and blessed with that unhappy wisdom which clings to some girls on the brink of their teens. "It's disgusting how much I love you," Meg says as she turns off the light. "Tell me about it," Sarah replies. She is cooler than her mother ("Mom, you're making me nervous"), and the fact that she talks and dresses like a boy only adds to her mild mystery. In the opening scenes, you can't quite place her, and the same is true of the other characters; the ground of the movie quakes and slides beneath your feet, as the sinister, raincoated real-estate agent (Ian Buchanan) leads Meg through the house and shows her the

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panic room. (She takes one look and asks, "Ever read any Poe?") As for the criminals, the film that can find room for Forest Whitaker as best supporting thief is assured of my vote. Just after he breaks and enters, there is a wonderful, full-figure shot of him, turning to the camera: semi-tender, slow as a bear (though bears can be riled), with a lazy eye and that ineffable shroud of sadness. He looks as fraught by the prospect of his own offense as Meg will be by his invasion; they are made for one another.

There is one bum note in "Panic Room," and it comes from Jared Leto. He plays Junior, who gradually turns out—this film releases information on a drip—to be related to the previous resident. He is the shaggy sheep of the family, and the chance for so clean-cut an actor to wear cornrows and a punky beard, to play a role with some jive to it, must have been irresistible. But I like Leto when he is square and mean, as he was in "American Psycho," and Fincher should not have asked him for comic relief. This film does not require relief; people will giggle anyway, as a safety valve for their distress, and, however hard he tries, Fincher will always have the studious solemnity of the unbending style fanatic. Laughter represents fresh air, the sudden gust of worldly sense, and that is not what he breathes; his happiest niche would have been a director's chair in a studio of the early nineteen-fifties, when there was a production line for noir. The flourishes of that time, starting with the prisonlike bars of light that fell across every other room, have become the signatures of its fatalist chic, and so, perhaps, it will be with David Fincher; long after the anxious air of 2002 has been dispelled, viewers will continue to get off on the twisting moves of his camera—half groove, half Wellesian waltz. At one point in the film, we travel from keyhole to kitchen countertop, passing silently and seamlessly through the curved handle of a coffeepot. Is this just showing off, or is "Panic Room" taking a second to remind us where the water boils and where the knives are kept? You never know when you may need them. As the real-estate agent says to Meg, in the ultimate sales pitch, "It's a very emotional property." Tell me about it. ♦

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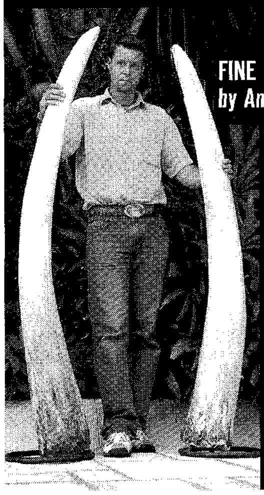

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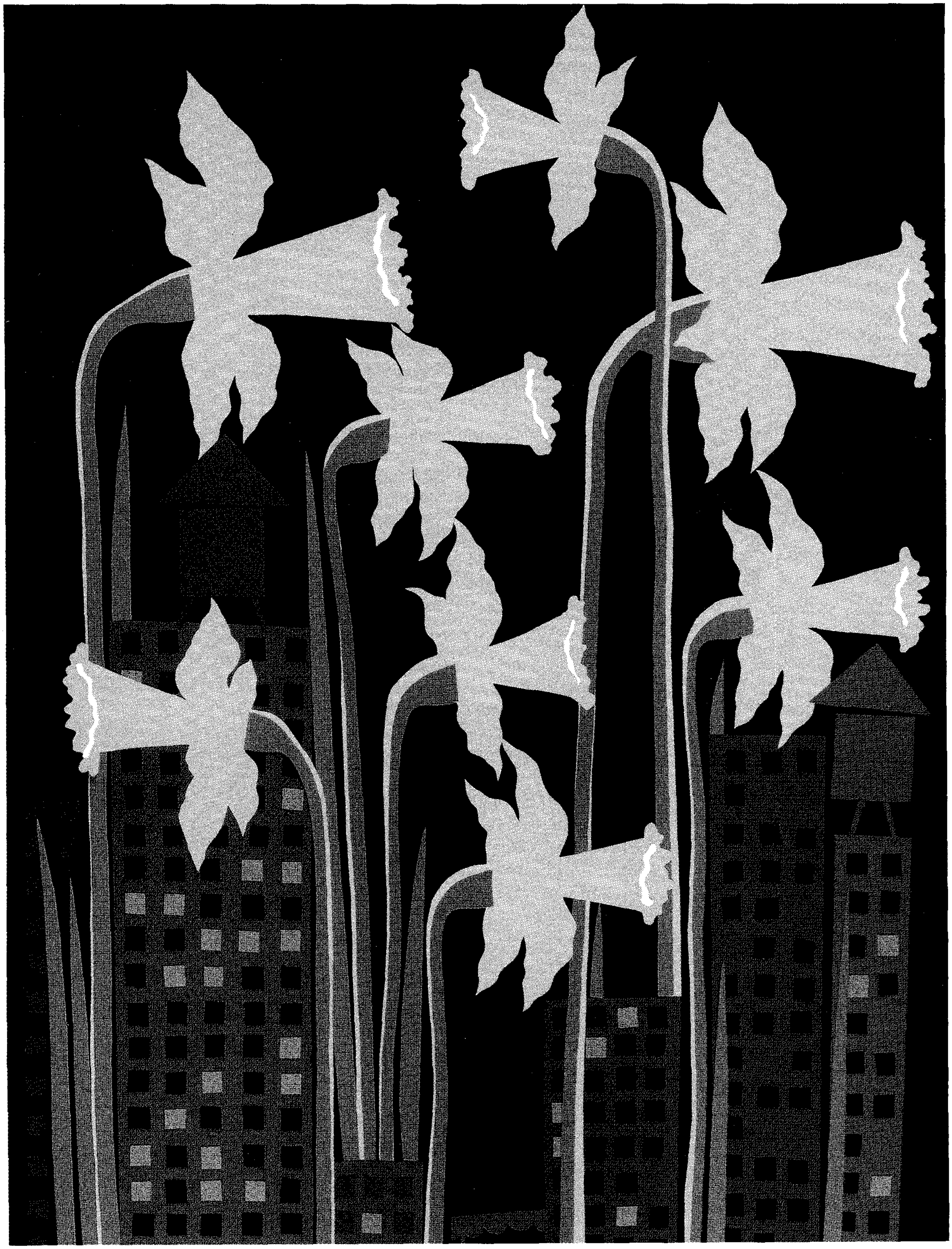

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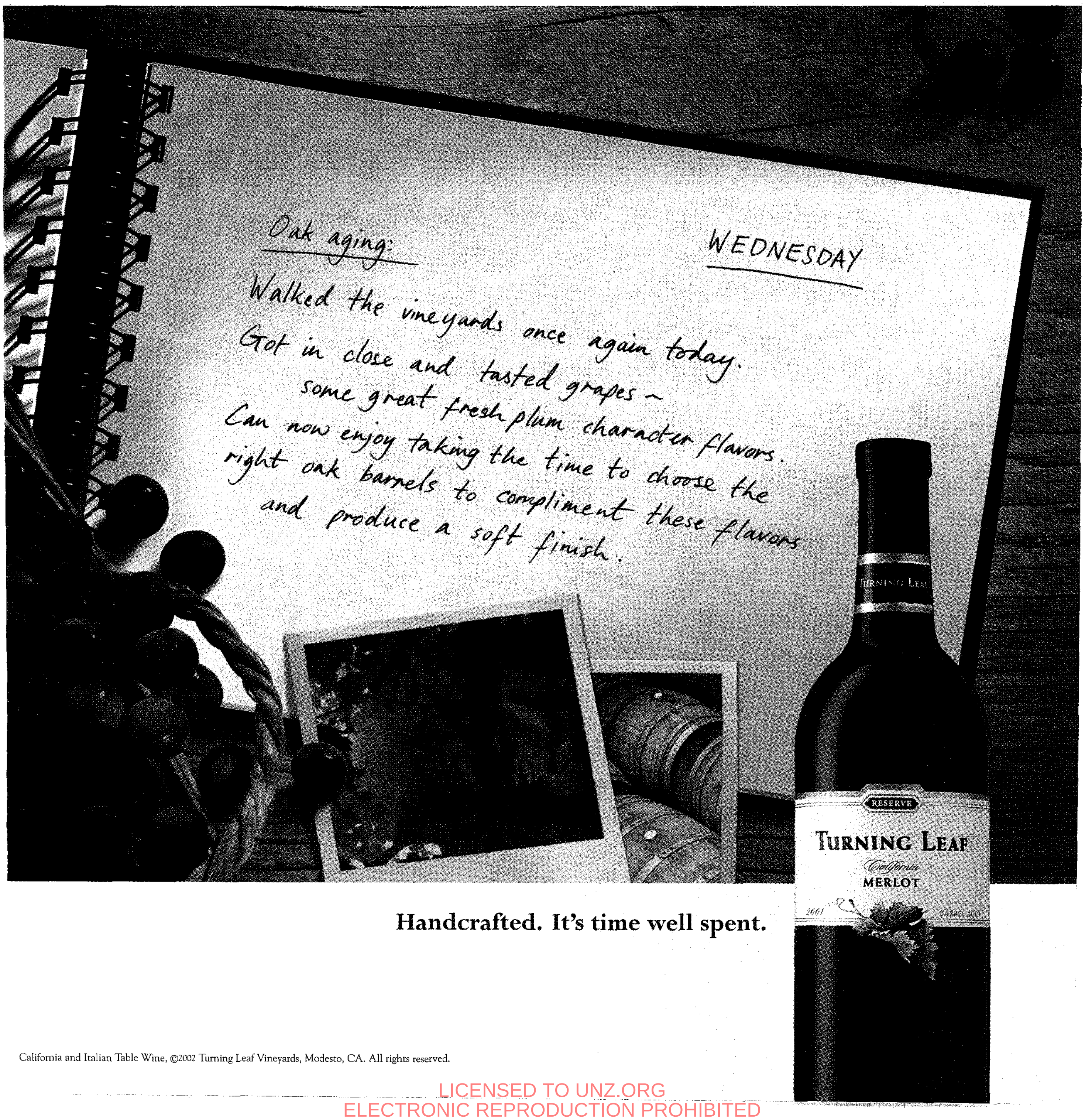

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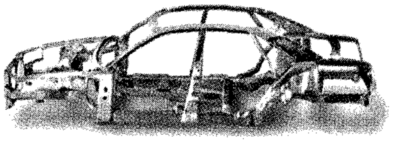

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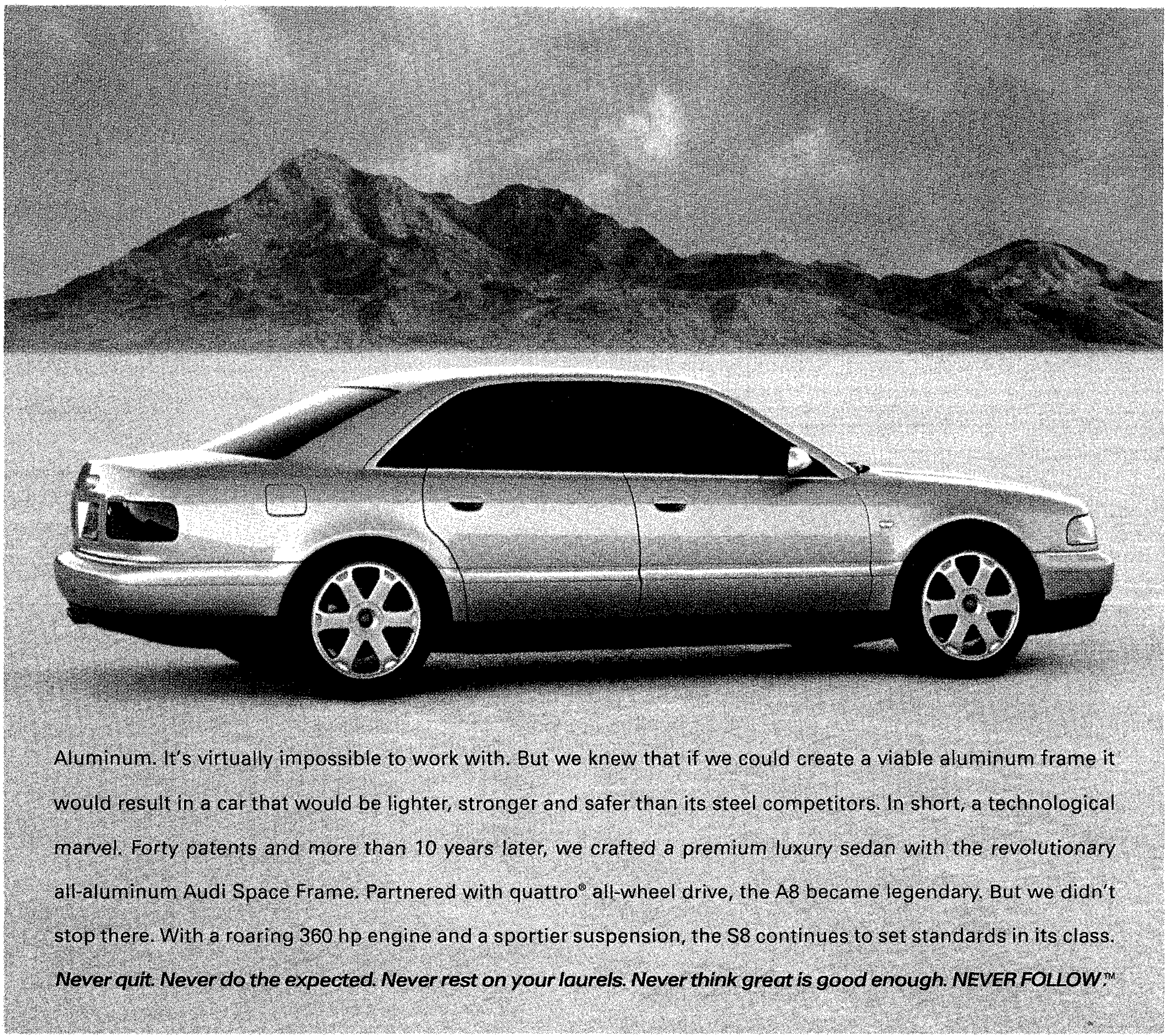

Aluminum. It's virtually impossible to work with. But we knew that if we could create a viable aluminum frame it would result in a car that would be lighter, stronger and safer than its steel competitors. In short, a technological marvel. Forty patents and more than 10 years later, we crafted a premium luxury sedan with the revolutionary all-aluminum Audi Space Frame. Partnered with quattro® all-wheel drive, the A8 became legendary. But we didn't stop there. With a roaring 360 hp engine and a sportier suspension, the S8 continues to set standards in its class.

Never quit. Never do the expected. Never rest on your laurels. Never think great is good enough. NEVER FOLLOW.™

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